WELCOME TO OUR SECOND ONLINE ISSUE – FROM THE SAFETY OF YOUR SOFA
FEATURES

16 THE VIEW FROM PARLIAMENT
How are Brighton & Hove’s three MPs handling business in the wake of the coronavirus pandemic?

18 GROWING OLD GRATEFULLY
Jane Trues talks about the trials and tribulations of growing up lesbian

19 WHEN I GROW UP I WANT TO BE...
Hanni Pidduck on what she thought she saw coming

20 THE AGES OF MAN
Finn reflects on how transitioning can mess with chronological time

21 DIFFERENT TIMES, DIFFERENT LIVES
Change has been a theme throughout writer Freiya Benson’s life to date

22 BRIDGING THE GENERATION GAP
Lee Smith from Hear Us Out on a rich diversity of experiences

23 THE NEW AGE
Persia West on reaching a time of balance and contentment

24 FIGHTING HIV STIGMA
Baroness Joyce Gould of Pottersnewton talks about changing attitudes towards HIV and her work with the Martin Fisher Foundation

25 THE AGE OF REASON
Richard Jeneway reflects on the importance of community

26 AGAINST ALL ODDS
The Sussex Beacon’s David Fray talks about living beyond expectations

27 LIVING WELL BEYOND AIDS
Guy relates his story of living through the darkest days of Aids

28 THE ‘SHRINKING BUNCH’
Campaigner Alan Spink talks about living and ageing with HIV

29 IT’S A MIXED BAG
Clive Blowes from Terrence Higgins Trust on innovative approaches to ageing with HIV

30 BREXIT BROKE MY HEART
As simple as that, says Maria Jastrzębska. But it’s not just about Europe

31 CHOIRS IN LOCKDOWN
Four of Brighton’s local choir music directors, Sam Cousins, Joe Paxton, Stefan Holmstrom and Aneesa Chaudhry, on how they fill their time

32 SCENE FROM THE SOFA
Performers and DJs from Brighton’s LGBTQ+ venues reveal how they’ve been spending their time and plans for when COVID is COV-er...
PRIDE POSTPONEMENT’S WIDE RAMIFICATIONS

Brighton & Hove Pride and the Brighton Rainbow Fund organisers have spoken out about how the postponement of this year’s event will have ramifications that “will be felt throughout the LGBTQ+ community as well as across the whole of the city”.

Paul Kemp, Pride managing director, said: “For many LGBTQ+ people, Pride is the only time they come together and feel part of a community. It is a time to connect with other marginalised groups to give as well as receive support.”

It was announced last month that the 30th anniversary Fabuloso Pride would not be going ahead this year in light of the coronavirus pandemic, with the event joining other major local and UK casualties, including the Brighton and Edinburgh Festivals. The celebration will now be held over the weekend of August 7-8, 2021, subject to landlord’s consent.

“Organising Pride is a year-round endeavour and we have already paid out on things like artists’ deposits, contractors’ deposits and fees, press and marketing, staff costs and infrastructure,” said Kemp. “The pandemic is devastating for the whole leisure and events industry and the jobs of suppliers and contractors where the majority of income comes during the summer months. It’s becoming inevitable that insurance and suppliers’ costs for all major events will increase.

“Our priority right now is to ensure we are in a fit state going forward to deliver an event next year while continuing to support the Brighton Rainbow Fund and our community organisations. There are real challenges ahead, but with support from our partner agencies, council and the community, we are confident we’ll get through this crisis.

“We know Pride will be even more important in bringing people back together again to celebrate our communities.”

In the past six years, Brighton & Hove Pride has raised more than £920,000 for community good causes, thanks to the support of businesses, sponsors and the many thousands who buy tickets for the Festival in Preston Park and Pride Village Party. It has supported hundreds of community organisations with grants through the Brighton Rainbow Fund, Pride Social Impact Fund and Pride Cultural Development Fund, which “has made a fundamental difference to the lives of thousands of people in our communities”.

Kemp added: “Clearly there’s going to be an impact on this year’s Pride fundraising, but we are exploring ideas with our community partners on how we might do something in August to help raise additional much needed community funds.”

Pride is the biggest fundraiser for the Brighton Rainbow Fund, which is a central distribution point for grants to 23 local LGBTQ+ and HIV projects.

Chris Gull, chair of the Brighton Rainbow Fund, said: “It is these projects, and the people they support, that will notice the effects of reduced fundraising this year, not just from the cancellation of Pride, but also other fundraisers such as Brighton Bear Weekend, and the closure of venues that have been important to our fundraising, both by organising events and by hosting our collection tins. We also rely on individual donors, who may be affected by the upcoming ‘downturn’.

“Like everybody else we have no idea how much we will have to distribute in October, but we do know that we’ll have to make some tough decisions.

“Pride is our biggest fundraiser and looking beyond the short term it’s important that it survives to continue raising funds for our community organisations for many years to come. To that end we’re asking everybody who would have attended Pride this year, and helped to raise funds through their attendance, to consider donating some of the money they’d have spent that weekend directly to the Brighton Rainbow Fund using the donate button on the website www.rainbow-fund.org”

Both Pride and the Brighton Rainbow Fund are calling on those who had already bought tickets to consider the option of ‘donating’ the ticket price by not claiming a refund. Pride will give anyone who does this priority in purchasing pre-release tickets for next year.

Paul Kemp said: “We are still processing refund applications but are heartened that the majority of existing customers have chosen to retain their tickets for next year thus supporting Pride going forward and our community fundraising.”

For more info, visit: www.brighton-pride.org

For more info about the Brighton Rainbow Fund, visit: www.rainbow-fund.org

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BRIGHTON & HOVE PRIDE #ALLINTHISTOGETHER

Since the announcement that this year’s Brighton & Hove Pride 30th anniversary celebration has been postponed due to the coronavirus pandemic, the organisers have been in discussion with artists about the rescheduled dates and will relaunch the 2021 Festival and tickets later in the year. Existing ticket holders do not need to do anything — their tickets will be honoured and rolled over to the rescheduled event on August 7-8, 2021, subject to landlord’s consent.

In a statement the organisers said: “As a Pride with purpose whose sole aim is to provide benefit to the community or to trade with a ‘social purpose’, we’re overwhelmed that so many ticket holders have chosen to retain their tickets for next year’s events or donated them back to support Pride going forward and our essential fundraising for local community organisations.”

Many local charities and community organisations rely on Pride for fundraising to get them through the year. If you are able to donate your ticket from this year’s event to support Pride going forward and its essential community fundraising, visit www.brighton-pride.org/donate-your-ticket-to-help-rides-community-fundraising/

As a thank you, those who donate their tickets from this year’s Pride will receive priority purchasing options in next year’s pre-release ticket sale.

If you would like to support the essential work of local community organisations, you can donate to the Brighton Rainbow Fund, which gives grants to local LGBTQ+/HIV groups who deliver effective frontline services to people in the city. To donate, visit www.rainbow-fund.org/donations/

Brighton Rainbow Fund said: “Under the current stewardship, since 2013, the annual event has raised just under a million pounds for good causes in Brighton & Hove, the vast majority of it distributed through the Brighton Rainbow Fund to local LGBTQ+-specific projects, which make a fundamental difference to the lives of hundreds of people in our communities. On behalf of the projects we support, and the people they support, we’re asking ticket holders to consider the option of not claiming a refund… in effect making a donation to allow them to continue their valuable work for another year.”

In a statement, the Pride Social Impact Fund said: “Thanks to the generosity of Pride and its supporters, the Social Impact Fund has donated tens of thousands of pounds of crucial funding to dozens of community groups and good causes over the years. While it is undoubtedly disappointing that Pride 2020 has been cancelled, we hope that those who can continue to support it as much as possible so that the positive messages of Pride continue to be heard across Brighton & Hove all year round.”
BBW ONLINE TEA DANCE FOR THE BRIGHTON RAINBOW FUND

The boys from Brighton Bear Weekend (BBW) hosted an Easter Sunday online Tea Dance last month for the Brighton Rainbow Fund with DJs Josh Sharp, Rob C London and Bozzy Bear spinning the tunes and special performances from Jon Bee and Jack Lynn. Viewers were encouraged to switch on the disco lights, grab a few props, mix some cocktails and join them over Zoom.

Graham Munday, BBW Chair, said: “We all love a good old Sunday Tea Dance, from Sundae Sunday to PTown, so we friendly furry groovers from BBW brought this virtual Tea Dance over Easter Weekend.”

For more info on BBW, visit: www.brightonbearweekend.com

DAVINA SPARKLE ONLINE SHOW FOR THE BRIGHTON RAINBOW FUND

Davina Sparkle has been bringing the glitter to people’s living rooms and raising vital funds for the Brighton Rainbow Fund, standing at £80 at the time of writing, every Thursday evening over Facebook Live.

The live shows, which take place from Sparkle Towers, are filled to the brim with camp chat, Q&As and shout outs, and 20% of all money raised has been going directly to the Brighton Rainbow Fund, which gives grants to local LGBTQ+/HIV groups, which deliver effective frontline services to people in the city.

For more info about the Brighton Rainbow Fund, visit www.rainbow-fund.org

To follow Davina Sparkle and make a donation, visit: Davina Sparkle Drag Queen

QUEER ENTERTAINERS THANK NHS

A rousing video with many of the country’s top drag queens, kings and princes was recorded last month to say a mega, glamorous thank you to our NHS. Organised by Miss Crystal, the video sees Anna Nass, Aunty Ginger, Bailey Bubbles, Eva Jenn-Talia, Ginny Tonic, Leona Mercedes Bendz, Mindy Pendant, Minus De Cock, Miss Courtney, Miss Dee Licious, Miss Helix, Miss Penny, Ms Special K, Prince CJ, Ruby Violet, Stephanie Von Clitz and person who sent a donation in with the chance to win something – from a MindOut T-shirt to one of Joe’s creepy trinkets.

Joe Black said: “Thank you all so much for your support on this, whether as a donator, viewer, sharer or commentator. MindOut was very pleased and we’ve mentioned perhaps doing another in May.”

For more information on MindOut, visit www.mindout.org.uk/

To view the video, vist: www.youtube.com/watch?v=VUzdRDrRsW-U

CABARET STARS RAISE £400 FOR MINDOUT

Cabaret Noir star Joe Black and special guest Arran Shurvinton’s Nosferatu raised an amazing £400 for MindOut, the charity which provides mental health support from LGBTQ+ people for LGBTQ+ people, at a special Quarantine Cabaret show last month.

Streamed live on Joe’s Facebook Page, the show was free to watch, though there was a link for tips/donations with a percentage of the money going to MindOut, whose work is particularly important during the coronavirus pandemic. On the night there was a prize draw, with every person who sent a donation in with the chance to win something – from a MindOut T-shirt to one of Joe’s creepy trinkets.

Joe Black said: “Thank you all so much for your support on this, whether as a donator, viewer, sharer or commentator. MindOut was very pleased and we’ve mentioned perhaps doing another in May.”

Follow Joe Black and Nosferatu on: Joe Black Arran Shurvinton’s Nosferatu

Miss Tish Ewe perform a stirring rendition of You Raise Me Up.

Miss Crystal said: “This is just a little video put together by some fabulous people to say a massive ‘thank you’ to all the amazing NHS and key workers working hard to keep Britain great. I am so pleased with how it’s turned out considering how quickly we recorded our bits.”

To view the video, vist: www.youtube.com/watch?v=VUzdRDrRsW-U
AGMC ANTHEM FOR COVID-19

Members of Actually Gay Men’s Chorus (AGMC) got together over Facebook last month to perform a new song, *Anthem for COVID-19*, which encourages us to stay home and stay safe during the coronavirus pandemic. With lyrics by musical director Samuel Cousins, and accompanied by Simon Gray, the empowering performance has been viewed over 6,000 times.

Nick Paget, chair of AGMC, introduced the piece, saying: “We hope it lifts your spirits as much as it has ours during this difficult time.”

To watch the video, visit Facebook page: Actually Gay Men’s Chorus
For more info, visit www.actuallygmc.org or follow actuallyggmc

OUTRIGHT OPENS COVID-19 GLOBAL LGBTIQ EMERGENCY FUND

OutRight Action International has opened up its the OutRight Covid-19 Global LGBTIQ Emergency Fund for applications by organisations who work directly with and for LGBTQ+ people (including MSM groups, trans groups, LBQ groups and intersex groups) based outside North America and Europe. So far it has raised $130,000 and expects to grant some $100,000 to groups working on the frontlines of the Covid-19 pandemic by early May.

The fund, which was launched in collaboration with founding partners Calvin Klein Inc, Microsoft Corp and the Dunn Family Charitable Foundation, will offer emergency financial resources to LGBTQ+ organisations around the world that are addressing issues exacerbated by COVID-19 facing LGBTQ+ people, including: access to basic needs such as food, emergency shelter, and Wi-Fi; access to healthcare; the economic impact, such as unemployment and poverty; domestic/family violence against LGBTQ+ people; protection of human rights, safety and security of LGBTQ+ people in times of crisis.

Jessica Stern, executive director of OutRight Action International, said: “OutRight has been working very hard to ramp up our response to support LGBTQ+ people and organisations. During times of crisis, vulnerable communities become even more vulnerable. LGBTQ+ people already experience barriers to access to health, high levels of domestic and family violence, and scapegoating for crises such as the COVID-19 pandemic. Now, LGBTQ+ people are also cut off from community centres and gatherings where we can be ourselves, feel supported, and safe. Our friends and partners tell us they’re also facing income loss, food scarcity, homelessness, and more.”

The organisation has also launched OutRight TV – a video and podcast series bringing to light stories of LGBTQ+ people and allies from across the globe, and how they are coping in light of the growing COVID-19 pandemic. Stern said: “Through OutRight TV we aim to foster connectivity between the global LGBTQ+ community at a time of increasing social distancing and isolation. The series will shed light on the amplified ways in which COVID-19 and its impact affect LGBTQ+ people and communities, and how we are coping. I urge you to tune in – we are hearing unique and inspiring stories, as well as finding common experiences and sources of solidarity across borders.”

For further info, visit: www.outrightinternational.org

RAINBOW SCRUBBERS DELIVER AGAIN…

The Rainbow Chorus ‘scrub hub’ completed its second commission last month and delivered 29 scrub sets, 15 extra tops and six extra pairs of trousers plus 12 scrub bags to the Royal Sussex County Hospital. It made this much needed supply of essential workwear in only two weeks with over 170 items made to date.

The Rainbow Chorus has released a music video, More Scrubs (based on original song: No Scrubs by TLC), starring Hannah Brackenbury, chorus members and volunteers to encourage volunteers around the UK to support the NHS by making scrubs for frontline staff. Please help spread the word by sharing their video with your friends, family and other contacts because, even when hospitals have enough supplies, there are care homes and home care workers who will need help.

To watch More Scrubs, visit: www.youtube.com/watch?v=MnluqGvkrLs
Our NHS or Rainbow Chorus
To make, volunteer or donate, visit: www.fortheloveofscrubs.co.uk
The Rainbow Chorus is the biggest and oldest LGBTQ+ choir in the South East, for more info, visit: www.rainbowchorus.org.uk

Nick Ford Photography

Civil partnerships & weddings
Corporate & charity events
Passport & visa photos
Child portraits
Headshots
Pet portraits
Studio hire
Commercial
Exhibition space

Thanking GScene readers for your ongoing support!
People living with HIV across the UK have been incorrectly sent text messages from Public Health England (PHE) telling them they need to ‘shield’ for 12 weeks. The messages were sent in the run up to the Easter weekend and informed the recipient that long-term isolation is needed putting those living with HIV in the most severely at-risk groups, such as those with severe lung and heart conditions and some cancer patients. The NHS Coronavirus Service states: “Your condition means you are at high risk of severe illness if you catch coronavirus. Please remain at home for 12 weeks unless a healthcare professional tells you to leave. You will get a letter from the NHS to confirm this.”

Terrence Higgins Trust (THT) and the British HIV Association (BHIVA) released a joint statement which said: “We are currently investigating who received these messages and why this has happened. In the meantime, BHIVA has contacted all members and added a message to the BHIVA website to reassure people living with HIV that they are not at any greater risk of COVID-19 [because of their HIV]. BHIVA and THT recommend that only people whose immune system is known to be very weak as shown by a CD4 count of less than 50, or who have had a serious illness due to suppression of the immune system in the last six months, should be encouraged to follow the shielding advice.”

Alan Spink, local HIV caseworker with the Sussex Beacon whilst being interviewed for this magazine described the situation as “a mess”.

“They [PHE] have not admitted the error. It is possible they have texted thousands using the NHS Flu-Jab list but not everyone on that list as had a message and not everyone living with HIV has a suppressed immune system so we do not know exactly who they have contacted.”

This wasn’t the first time that PHE has been accused of unnecessarily generating anxiety among the HIV positive community. Early on in the crisis it put out guidance calling on over-70s and people with weakened immune systems, including those with HIV, to strictly socially distance themselves from others.

BHIVA criticised this guidance as reflecting a lack of evidence in classifying all people with HIV as vulnerable. Dr Michael Brady of THT issued a statement contradicting PHE and confirming that not all people with HIV are considered at increased risk. “Those on HIV treatment with a good CD4 count and an undetectable viral load are not considered to have weakened immune systems.”

He went on to state that he would advise that a ‘good CD4 count’ means anything over 350 and added: ‘As long as your viral load remains undetectable, your CD4 count will be as good.’

For more info, visit: www.tht.org.uk and www.bhiva.org

THT ONLINE HIV AWARENESS COURSE

THT is launching a new online version of its popular HIV Awareness training course. The course, which ordinarily is a day in length and would take place in person at either Ship Street or at the Sussex Beacon, has been specially adapted to be delivered online during the current Covid-19 lockdown.

The free course has been divided into four modules covering the basics of HIV, treatment & prevention, stigma & discrimination, and ageing with HIV. Each module is an hour and a half long and will be delivered using Zoom video conferencing, which is also free to use. The course is suitable for anyone who knows very little about HIV or wants to brush up their knowledge and be brought up to date with the current situation for people living with HIV.

The course starts from May 5, 2020. For further details and to book, contact Alice Booth at Alice.Booth@tht.org.uk

For more info, visit: www.tht.org.uk
Since adapting community support for people with HIV at the end of March, Lunch Positive has prepared and cooked more than 1,000 dishes and made more than 250 home deliveries.

This support has reached many new people, including those who are being ‘shielded’, are self-isolating, and people living alone whose support networks have been diminished or lost because of the removal of social contact. Many people living on very low or constrained income, in temporary accommodation or without adequate cooking facilities are also being supported.

The Lunch Positive volunteer team has been undertaking this essential support work as part of a city-wide response to help feed people and to help people stay connected and feel less isolated. Volunteers have been working in completely new ways, taking on new roles, working extra days and shifts, and in total giving 1,020 hours of time in the past month.

Every week the volunteer team has prepared from scratch a range of healthy and freshly cooked food, which is chilled or frozen and doorstep-delivered to people’s homes. This is accompanied by a bag of groceries. From May onwards the delivery menu will also include a selection of fresh salads and vegetable dishes.

Stocks of food to enable this service have been donated through local supporters, catering businesses, Brighton & Hove Food Partnership, and FareShare – the food redistribution charity. However, Lunch Positive still needs to buy food items and is actively fundraising to support the service.

The charity has maintained ongoing contact with people using the service through regular follow-up phone calls. Feedback from people receiving the support has been enthusiastic and often very moving. Many people have described the food as “a lifeline” and “the only nutritious meals of the week”. Reflecting many people’s sentiments, one person living alone in temporary accommodation recently described the offer and supply of food as “the only example that people still care”.

Alongside this outreach food support, Lunch Positive has been providing regular ‘friendship calls’. Volunteers are available to take calls very day, to share a general chat and check-in with people, and to help people find any information or sources of advice that might help. This service is entirely confidential and anyone with HIV living locally is invited to call in on weekdays between 12-3pm.

Gary Pargeter, Lunch Positive service manager, said: “The commitment and energy demonstrated over the past month, together with continued enthusiasm, ideas and plans for the future, are all amazing examples of the supportiveness of our volunteers, members and the wider community.

“In a very short time we have completely turned around our usual service to provide something hugely needed and completely new for these unprecedented times. In time our usual services will resume, but until then we want to support people with HIV in our community as much as possible in these new ways. Please do look at our website to find out more about how we can help, and how people can support our work.”

For more info, visit: www.lunchpositive.org or lunchclubfriends/ or email info@lunchpositive.org or call 07846 464384
INQUIRY LAUNCHED INTO IMPACT OF PANDEMIC ON PEOPLE WITH PROTECTED CHARACTERISTICS

As the coronavirus (Covid-19) pandemic continues to wreak havoc across the world, the UK government’s Women & Equalities Committee is seeking information about its impact on people with protected characteristics under the Equality Act. These include: age, disability, sex, marriage and civil partnership, pregnancy and maternity, race, religion or belief, sexual orientation and gender reassignment. The committee also wants to hear about the measures being taken to tackle this impact, following concerns expressed by the Equality & Human Rights Commission, among other organisations.

Caroline Nokes, Chair of the Women & Equalities Committee, said: “In these extraordinary times, it is as important as ever that the government considers how its actions to tackle the coronavirus impact differently on different communities. Passing emergency legislation at great speed has been essential. Now we need to understand the present and future effect on those who may already be marginalised. We are listening, and we need your evidence to help us to help the government consider equalities issues, to ensure that its policies and plans are as effective as possible.”

The committee wants to find out more about the impact government measures, including emergency legislation, are having on people with these protected characteristics, and is asking:

- Have all the relevant equality issues been considered?
- Are there any unforeseen consequences?
- If there are problems, what could be done differently/better?

Among issues already brought to the committee’s attention are:

- Stonewall has reiterated that for some LGBTQ+ people, the risks of homelessness, insecure employment, restricted access to healthcare and other inequalities will deepen as a result of the health crisis;
- The increased risk and severity of domestic abuse when there’s a requirement to stay home – and the pressure on the healthcare and education settings and specialist services which might normally identity and assess risks and provide support;
- The urgent need to redeploy healthcare and social work professionals to deal with the pandemic may leave older and disabled people vulnerable in other ways;
- Children with special educational needs and their families may be particularly affected by school closures;
- The impact on ‘gig economy’ workers, who are more likely to be young, from a BAME (black and minority ethnicity) background or have caring commitments.

Aware there may be many more equality impacts, the committee says it is keen to hear from individuals and from organisations on the following questions:

- How have people been affected by the illness or the response to it?
- Have there been specific impacts on people due to them having a protected characteristic?
- Are there any unforeseen consequences to measures brought in to ease the burden on frontline staff?

The government has said current measures will be reviewed this month, and measures in the Coronavirus Act be voted on again in six months’ time:

- What needs to change or improve, which could be acted on this month?
- What needs to change or improve, which could be acted on in six months’ time?

The committee asked for responses by the end of April, but has said that evidence submitted after that time will still be useful as it will continue to review the situation and scrutinise the government. Any evidence directly relevant to the government’s three-week review of the current measures should be provided as soon as possible.

For more info about Parliament Select committees, visit: www.parliament.uk/about/how/committees/select/

For more info about Visiting Parliament: Watch committees, visit: www.parliament.uk/visiting/visiting-and-tours/watch-committees-and-debates/committees/

COMMONLY USED HIV DRUG BEING TESTED IN COVID-19 TRIALS

AIDS Plan, and began on April 1 for an initial period of 12 weeks.

There is no suggestion that HIV medication of any sort could or should be seen as a Covid-19 cure or prevention tool. There has been some speculation that the anti-malaria drug hydroxychloroquine may also be a possible source of prevention and this drug will also be included in the trials also examining Truvada.

Truvada consists of two drugs, tenofovir disoproxil fumarate and emtricitabine, and has long been a part of highly effective combination therapies for people living with HIV. It is also used by some HIV-negative people as pre-exposure prophylaxis, or PrEP soon to be made widely available across the National Health Service.

The Spanish study will enrol 4,000 participants randomised into groups taking a range of single-dose daily regimens. Initial results are expected to be published in late July/August.

CALL TO PEER ACTION! THEY WANT YOUR OLD LAPTOPS AND TABLETS

Although almost all of Peer Action’s services have been temporarily suspended, it is very much continuing as an organisation to work towards making life easier for people living with HIV.

While the use of video conferencing has made communication for many people easier this is not true for everyone. Difficulties can arise due to the lack of a suitable device or an issue of trust and some people are unable to join the technological changes. This can further the isolation of lockdown by denying people access to the services they rely on and some are unable to access a doctor as all appointments are currently taking place via Zoom and similar electronic platforms.

To help ease the isolation, Peer Action is launching an appeal. Do you have an unused or unwanted tablet, or maybe even a laptop, that you no longer use? Would you be willing to donate it to Peer Action so it can pass it on to people living with HIV who do not have current access to video services?

If so, please contact Peer Action via its Facebook page or website and it will be in touch to work out a way to get the device from you and pass on to someone who really needs it.

Ideally, the device will have been cleared of all personal data and reset to factory settings and come with a power cord. It must be able to use WiFi. At present Peer Action is not looking for old smartphones – tablets and laptops please.

Please have a think and a look round to see what you did with your old device last time you upgraded to a better model.

You would be helping someone establish contact with their friends and peers in these difficult times.

For more info, visit: https://peeraction.net
SWITCHBOARD AND LUNCH POSITIVE PROPOSE A BEFRIENDING SERVICE

Switchboard and Lunch Positive are asking if you think there’s a need for a local Befriending Service for LGBTQ+ people and people living with HIV. Befriending is a mutually rewarding friendship between a volunteer befriender and a person who requests befriending. Befriending can help ease loneliness and social isolation.

Switchboard and Lunch Positive — supported by the Rainbow Fund — are keen to find out your views on whether an LGBTQ and HIV Befriending Service is needed and what it could look like. They are asking people to complete a quick survey.

If there is a positive response, Switchboard and Lunch Positive aim to seek funding to set up the service. They’ll work with Together Co — the loneliness charity which has run a befriending service in Brighton & Hove for 20 years.

To access the befriending survey, visit: www.surveymonkey.co.uk/r/B2VQHT6

Survey participants can enter a prize draw for a £50 supermarket voucher. The survey closes on May 15, 2020.

MAKE YOURSELF AT HOME, SAYS THT

HIV charity Terrence Higgins Trust (THT) has launched an online hub to ensure everyone has the support they need around their sexual health during the coronavirus lockdown, including free online counselling for people living with HIV.

The new At Home service is an expansion of the charity’s online services with STI tests through the post, peer-to-peer support via its myHIV forum, and advice and information online and over the phone. The charity is inviting everyone to make themselves At Home in this new virtual space.

THT is also adapting its services in Brighton & Hove and West Sussex. Support for people living with HIV, counselling, welfare and benefits advice, as well as health promotion activities including advice on HIV and STI testing, can now all be accessed online.

However, the charity’s Ship Street home is now closed, but the team can be contacted via the THT website. For more info, visit: www.tht.org.uk

WILL WRITING ON THE INCREASE

The organisation responsible for the National Will Register is reporting that the demand for Will writing has increased 70-75% since the start of March 2020. These statistics suggest that in the current coronavirus pandemic many people are now wanting to review or write their Will.

A Will is a legal document which outlines who you want to inherit (your beneficiaries) and who you would like to oversee the distribution of your estate (your executors). Without a Will, additional and unnecessary emotional and financial stress can fall on your loved ones after you have gone. While so-called ‘Will-kits’ are freely available online, a Will is not typically expensive to have drafted by a solicitor and once complete most law firms register their clients’ Wills with the National Will Register free of charge.

A spokesperson for the National Will Register commented: “One of the biggest problems that family members face when somebody has died is understanding if a Will exists, locating it and ensuring it is the very latest version.”

The National Will Register was set up more than a decade ago to ensure that missing Wills are a thing of the past.

For more information on how to write and register your Will, visit: www.nationalwillregister.co.uk

DAVID HARVEY 1960-2020

The former chair of Brighton Pride David Harvey has died after contracting Covid-19. He was 59. The former journalist and businessman died early in April in Andorra, where he had been working as a ski instructor and running a chalet business. He was admitted to hospital in the middle of March, sedated and put on a ventilator a few days later but his condition deteriorated and he never regained consciousness.

He took over the chair of Brighton Pride in 2002 when it was all but bankrupt. Under his leadership it secured charitable status, developed partnerships with local businesses and organisations and its finances were turned around. By the 2004 event, more than 65 floats and tableaux took part and the festival in Preston Park attracted a crowd of over 100,000. Later in 2004 David became co-owner and publisher of the Brighton-based LGBTQ+ magazine 3SIXTY with David Tuck and Jamie Hakim before moving to Sitges in Spain in 2009 to teach English and run a property and tourism business.

Jamie Hakim, who volunteered along with David at Brighton Pride and later ran 3SIXTY magazine with him, said: “David always had the knack of bringing the brightest and best people together and he loved watching them in action. Most of these people are still close friends. That of course says so much about the kind of man David was.”

His friend Huw Edwards said: “I remember standing next to David on the balcony of the control point in Preston Park at the first Brighton Pride under his leadership. We were both totally overwhelmed at the sight of the huge, happy crowd. All of this happened thanks to David’s inspiration, persuasion, cajoling and sheer determination to provide a free Pride for the whole community.”

David was born in Hurst Green in Surrey in 1960 to Eleanor and Ernest Harvey, who was general secretary at the Press Association. After graduating from Eastbourne College and Hull University, he began his career as a station assistant and reporter at BBC Radio Humsiders in 1982 before moving to London to join Capital Radio’s pioneering fast-paced news programme The Way It Is as a reporter. The programme launched the careers of a succession of national broadcasters.

He left Capital to work as a producer on Esther Rantzen’s BBC consumer magazine TV show That’s Life and later Hearts of Gold, which commended members of the public for their good deeds. He moved in front of the camera in 1989 as a reporter for London Weekend Television, returned to Capital as head of news in 1992, before taking up a position as head of entertainment news for the independent producer Unique Broadcasting, which was supplying material to a network of radio stations. He moved to Brighton in the late 1990s and returned to radio presenting on BBC Southern Counties Radio from 2000 to 2002.

He spent his later years developing his business interests, teaching English and sailing. He qualified as a ski instructor in 2013 and had been running a chalet business, Ski Chalet Andorra, and teaching children with learning disabilities before he was taken ill.

He became Clive Owen’s civil partner in 2007. They married last year. Clive and David’s sisters Ann and Carrie survive him. They intend to hold memorial services later in Spain, Andorra and Brighton.
SWITCHBOARD TO REOPEN TRANS AND NON-BINARY LINK

Brighton & Hove LGBT Switchboard has announced it is reopening its Trans and Non-Binary (TNB) Link Service, a social prescribing service which links people to community services and groups to improve their health and wellbeing. Vernon Collins is the new TNB worker. Due to the current social distancing measures, it is not currently able to offer face-to-face appointments, however it will be offering appointments online using Zoom, Whatsapp, or on the phone (call backs can be given so no phone credit is needed).

Lyndsay Macadam, Switchboard chief executive, said: “I am very pleased to be relaunching the TNB Social Prescribing Service, particularly at this time when people are experiencing higher levels of need around wellbeing and need more support to access local services, many of which have changed the way they are operating during the current crisis. “Many communities, particularly those with protected characteristics or multiple marginalised identities, are likely to experience higher levels of social isolation or greater difficulties accessing services now more than ever and our TNB Link project offers a practical, supportive and confidential service to help improve health and wellbeing.”

TNB Link is a social prescribing service in Brighton & Hove that links you to community services and groups to improve your health and wellbeing.

What it can help with:
• Anxiety, stress and depression
• Housing, money and benefits issues
• Isolation and loneliness
• Language and cultural barriers
• Lifestyle factors such as diet and exercise
• Navigating transition
• Work and unemployment

Please note Switchboard is not a medical service and cannot offer or give advice on medical conditions. Please call your GP or 111 if you have any medical concerns/needs, and 999 in an emergency.

Switchboard is currently taking on new referrals, please fill out the online referral form www.switchboard.org.uk/projects/trans-support/trans-link/referral-form/, or call on 07928830757 if you are unable to access this. Email: translink@switchboard.org.uk

For more information, visit: www.switchboard.org.uk/projects/trans-support/trans-link/

TRANS COMMUNITY IN PAKISTAN FACES ACUTE LOCKDOWN HARDSHIP

The trans community in Pakistan is facing acute hardship during the lockdown that’s in effect across the country. Weddings and other celebratory functions were a main source of income for many of the country’s trans women, who are now unable to work. Despite relief packages announced by the government, help isn’t filtering down to the poorest and most vulnerable, who are often reliant on Non-Governmental Organisations (NGOs) for support. Many of these NGOs have suspended work while current measures are in place.

Shakila, a trans woman from the Peshawar region, spoke to English language publication The News: “We are the most unfortunate human beings on earth because neither the federal nor the provincial government has bothered to consider our plight. The government and the philanthropists are giving relief packages to others, but have ignored us as if we are not humans.”

Before lockdown some trans women were able to work, but many have to resort to begging. Those able to save a little money do so to pay for treatment. Shakila added: “It hurt us when the federal and provincial governments announced relief packages for industrialists and government servants, but ignored the most neglected section of the society.”

The country has an estimated half a million trans people, which dwarfs the official statistic of over 10,000. Free healthcare was extended to trans Pakistanis in January but there’s still much to be done for the community.

Its thought that 7% of trans people in Pakistan are HIV positive, and globally trans people are 49 times more likely to be living with HIV than the general population.

Faizan Fiaz, London-based filmmaker, who documented the plight of transgender Pakistanis in their film Poshida, spoke of their experience of this marginalised group. “Pakistani trans women, known as Khawaja Sira, are among the most marginalised and vulnerable people in Pakistan. Most rely on sex work, begging and providing illicit entertainment – activities which put them in close contact with others – to make ends meet. This puts them in a more precarious situation than the general population in normal circumstances, but obviously more so during the Covid-19 pandemic.”

The plight of Khawaja Sira in Pakistan needn’t remain bleak. Fiaz goes on to say: “The means exist within and outside Pakistan to ease the situation for Khawaja Sira (and all minorities who are suffering). Highlighting their plight is one way, supporting human rights and trans rights organisations is another and so is putting pressure on the Pakistani government.”

Poshida, a ground-breaking independent documentary, follows LGBTQ+ individuals in Pakistan, explores their history, culture and challenges and examines sexuality and gender identities in south Asia and discusses colonialism, religion, class and the influence of US foreign policy. To view it, visit Facebook FemSocLUMS, a feminist student society at Lahore University of Management Sciences, is fundraising to provide emergency rations of food and soap for the transgender community. Donations can be made via FemSocLUMS/
Dr Sam Hall examines the Equalities Minister Liz Truss’ disturbing plan for reforms to the Gender Recognition Act

You see, in the beginning those among us who live and think progressively had great hopes that a consultation might result in the lifting of some of the frankly archaic and discriminatory processes embedded in the existing GRA. At the time (2004) of its original passing, this Bill and this country were at the forefront of the international push for trans rights. One of the first countries in the world to enshrine the right to change gender and have it legally recognised, including protecting trans people against discrimination, we then saw trans people protected in their own special category under the Equalities Act 2010.

But it was also a time when trans visibility was minimal, and necessarily so; to be out as trans at the time of this Bill passing was to attract harassment, violence, both sexual and otherwise, social isolation and rejection. In fact the GRA was intended to allow people to up sticks and start their lives over, so as to avoid this degree of persecution; secrecy was enshrined in the Act and in the medical processes that necessarily accompanied a ‘full’ transition across the gender divide.

At the time, and still today, is it those assigned male at birth who suffer the most. An adult body that has been through puberty on testosterone has features which cannot be undone. Many trans women are recognisably assigned male at birth, and cannot escape the biological effects of testosterone, even though this has been and continues to be the source of psychological distress of an untold magnitude, resulting in suicides, poor mental health, job and family loss, addiction and poverty.

The GRA reform was meant to mean that people did not have to jump through so many hoops to demonstrate that distress; it has never been compulsory to have had any medical treatment in order to acquire a Gender Recognition Certificate (the outcome of a panel decision upon postal application), which in turn allows for the issuing of a new birth certificate with an altered gender marker, and yet people felt pressured to do so – to prove themselves if you like. It was meant to make it cheaper (6,000 applications in 15 years suggests only a privileged few could afford the fee of just under £200) and it was meant to be an opportunity to allow recognition of non-binary identity.

GRA reform was something that younger, less binary-constrained trans people wanted and were pushing for. The NUS got right behind it. It was not going to mean anything to anyone who wasn’t trans, apart from perhaps being pleased that we weren’t having our identities quite so heavily policed by the state. And then came the counter-attack.

The GRA reform consultation saw a rapid rise in interconnected hate groups, (Fairplay For Women, Woman’s Place UK, LGB Alliance) with spurious links to far-right evangelical hate groups in the US, and questionable sources of income. It gave birth to the widespread hate-filled rhetoric against trans women which still lurks beneath the Covid-19 tarpaullin, and resulted in court cases both crown and civil, as hate crimes soared and liberal ran amok.

You, the privileged, have nothing but fear encountered when an oppressed minority starts to become more visible. Trans people and their lives challenge gender norms in a way that literally rock the foundations of our socially conservative society.

A society where the nuclear family is upheld as a building block, despite it being a hotbed for abuse and violence, where men are masculine and women are feminine, and babies are born of a union between the two.

I know the rise of LGBTQ+ visibility, same-sex union, marriage and other rights that have been won over the past 50 years are hugely important, but somehow the trans rights movement is uncovering a deeply held belief that somehow this is wrong. And it must be stopped. It boils down to the weaponisation of the penis and vulnerability of those without one. We cannot allow this legitimate concern to be appropriated as a cosh to bash trans people with.

In Liz Truss’ speech, she goes on to mention three specific issues, none of which are actually anything to do with the GRA or the recent consultation held on its reform. All are thinly veiled attempts to begin to roll back the precious rights we have won this century, including the treatment of distressed children. There is clear malintent here, and I very much fear the direction of travel.

You can find out more by contacting Liz Truss, Minister for Women & Equalities, who gave evidence on April 22, 2020 to the cross party Women & Equalities Select Committee online, setting out her priorities for the Government Equalities Office. The final section of her speech was devoted to trans rights, specifically to the reform of the Gender Recognition Act (GRA) following a public consultation in 2018. Brexit and other shenanigans saw this issue shelved for a time, but here it is, rearing its ugly head again. Full transcript of the speech here: www.gov.uk/government/speeches/minister-for-women-and-equalities-liz-truss-sets-out-priorities-to-women-and-equalities-select-committee

Dr Sam Hall is a Gscene columnist, a practising GP and chair of Clare Project, Brighton & Hove’s long established self-supporting trans support and social group open to anyone wishing to explore issues around gender identity.
ALLSORTS YOUTH PROJECT LAUNCHES #KEEPPROUD

Allsorts Youth Project has launched the #KeepProud crowdfunding and social media campaign to last from Friday, May 1 – Friday, June 26 to raise £2,000 to maintain and expand its online LGBTQ+ youth services for the duration of Covid-19 safely measures and beyond.

According to the charity, which supports and empowers children and young people under 26 who are lesbian, gay, bisexual, trans or unsure (LGBTU) of their sexual orientation, one in four LGBTQ+ young people who have experienced homo/bi/transphobia in the past six months had experienced it at home (70 young people surveyed by Allsorts, March 2020).

By providing online group and one-to-one support for the duration of social distancing/isolation, Allsorts can ensure that LGBTQ+ children, young people and their parents/carers across Sussex and further afield in the South East are not left alone, can continue accessing the vital support of Allsorts, connect with their LGBTQ+ peers, and #KeepProud at this very difficult and isolating time.

In the wake of circumstances surrounding Covid-19, charities including Allsorts have seen a sharp fall in fundraising events among other forms of income. With 91% of LGBTQ+ young people having experienced mental health problems (Allsorts, March 2020), it’s paramount that Allsorts can continue offering its specialist services to those in need, while expanding its reach to LGBTQ+ children and young people in harder to reach rural areas, and those with social anxiety and/or mobility issues.

Now, more than ever, Allsorts’ supporters can make all the difference in enabling this to happen.

Effie Fowler, Allsorts fundraiser, said: “Our work, youth consultations and lived experience inform us that being an LGBTQ+ young person can be a very isolating and lonely experience. As much as the #KeepProud campaign is about raising funds for children and young people across Sussex and the South East to access our services, it’s about community. Through the social media campaign, we aim to share positive messages from a wide range of LGBTQ+ people, reassuring LGBTQ+ young people and each other that we’re not alone, despite how isolating current circumstances may be.

“For the duration of the campaign, we’ll be promoting virtual fundraising events, including live music, spoken word, pilates sessions and much more. It’s so important that we keep connected, have fun, and #KeepProud at this time. It’s deeply heart-warming to see so many of our supporters get creative in their fundraising efforts, and I look forward to sharing these experiences with our wonderful supporters.”

An Allsorts service user said: “Allsorts has saved my life. This isn’t an exaggeration, the support that Allsorts has provided has lifted me in my darkest days and stopped me attempting suicide many times. I can be safe here. I’m so grateful for this service and I hope it can continue to run for many more years.”

For full details of the #KeepProud campaign, visit www.crowdfunder.co.uk/keepproud.

For events, follow Allsorts on @allsortsyouthproject or @allsortsyouth

To donate £5 now, text KEEPPROUD to 70470 (texts cost £5 plus one standard rate message).

INTERNATIONAL FAMILY EQUALITY DAY SCHEDULED FOR MAY 3, 2020

This year’s International Family Equality Day (IFED) will be celebrated on Sunday, May 3, 2020 with a focus on integrating the idea of family diversity in the education system. Since its inception in 2012, IFED celebrations have seen rainbow families and their friends get together in various ways, whether in large gatherings in public parks or cozy meet-ups in private backyards.

Obviously things will be different this year — meetings will be held virtually, with IFED co-president Derricka Castillo-Salazar, from Belize, saying: “Thankfully, there are many possibilities to meet virtually while being safe at home. More than ever, we’ll take advantage of the opportunities provided by social media – not only to spend time together, but also to spread our message.” She is encouraging the IFED community to get engaged online, filling social media with pictures showing the beauty of family diversity and recommendations for children’s books depicting rainbow families. “Let’s be seen. Let’s be visible and empower each other.”

The organisation stressed that, while visibility and representation of family diversity are important in general, they are especially key within the educational system. “School experiences shape a child’s identity,” said IFED board member Benny Odongo, from Kenya, saying: “As LGBTQ+ people, we can paint and draw our very own family trees, brightly coloured and emblazoned with inclusive language representing each and every one. We encourage rainbow families around the world to send us their family trees so that we can share and be proud of them.”

Creativity is being encouraged as a way to reach these goals, with one suggestion being to create family trees that “reinvent and extend the concept of family.” Newly elected IFED board member Mike Edwards, from Australia, “Otherwise, the door is open for misunderstanding, discrimination, exclusion and even violence.”

When it comes to other ways of getting involved in this year’s IFED celebrations, the organisation says: “Make sure to join your friends online, to exchange stories and encourage one another, upload pictures of your families and get to the official IFED hashtags out into the world. We look forward to seeing you next month.”

Since its beginnings in 2012, IFED has grown into a worldwide movement. Last year’s edition was commemorated in 50 countries and 117 cities. For more information, visit https://internationalfamilyequalityday.org/international-family-equality-day-2020-family-diversity-in-education/

RAILWAY CLUB BRIGHTON OFFER ALL NHS EMPLOYEES FREE MEMBERSHIP

Railway Club Brighton has announced it will be offering all NHS employees free membership once it reopens after the coronavirus pandemic. If you would like to get your membership ready in time for the club reopening, email the Railway Club Brighton secretary, Mike Edwards: mikedwards@btinternet.com or send them a message on Facebook add the link please.
GAY COUPLE HAND OUT RAINBOW MASKS ON THE STREETS OF POLAND

A Polish gay couple, Jakub and David, have given away hundreds of rainbow masks to people on the streets of Poland, contributing to the fight against the coronavirus pandemic and homophobia in the country. The pair have taken homophobes in their country head on, trying to remove the stigma surrounding gay people and doing something positive during the coronavirus pandemic.

Jakub says: “Many Polish people call us a plague, so we thought if we help people overcome the real plague, they might change their mind. I know it’s naïve, but if we can do something good then why not?”

Jakub and David borrowed a sewing machine from one of their grandmothers and began to sew masks in order to give them away for free.

David says: “Our masks are unique because they’re in rainbow colours. Our tailor friend supported us, so 300 pieces were sewn which we took to the streets.”

The pair wandered the streets of the tri-city towns of Gdansk, Gdynia and Sopot, which are on the coast of Gdansk Bay, Baltic Sea.

Jakub added: “Many LGBTQ+ free zones were created in our country so we were afraid of how people would react, but they were really touched by our idea. They really appreciated that someone cared about their health. It was great to see that rainbow colours didn’t scare people but will help keep them stay safe.”

LEGENDS BAR & HOTEL CLOSED AND IN VOLUNTARY LIQUIDATION

Gscene has reached out to the team at Legends Bar & Hotel, Brighton for comment and to address community concerns regarding its future. We were referred to a statement on its website, which said:

“The company has had to make the difficult decision to close with immediate effect and a licensed firm of insolvency practitioners has been instructed to assist in placing the company into Creditors Voluntary Liquidation. Therefore, no further bookings can be made. For all existing bookings, you will be contacted shortly with details on how you can register your claim. If you have paid for a booking using a credit card, you may wish to contact your credit card provider to check whether you are entitled to a refund. The company sincerely apologises for the inconvenience caused.”

Legends (Brighton) Ltd

#BOPFORTHEBEACON – DANCING NURSES RAISE SPIRITS OF ISOLATED

The Sussex Beacon has launched a digital participation challenge asking its supporters to record themselves dancing as an act of solidarity and support for clinical teams. Participants will record themselves dancing in front of their phones or computers and upload them with a message supporting Sussex Beacon nurses and doctors, as well as their support teams working through the current COVID-19 crisis.

Using Facebook, Twitter or Instagram, participants are asked to tag the Sussex Beacon on their posts and use the hashtag #BopForTheBeacon. The Sussex Beacon also suggests nominating two or more friends to join in with each post, to help spread the word and keep the chain of gratitude going.

Mark Bond, fundraising manager said: “Having had first-hand experience of COVID-19 symptoms in the past week with the possibility at one stage of being admitted I know how scary this virus can be – and mine was relatively mild. All the staff working 24 hours a day within the Beacon supporting our vulnerable patients have been amazing and worked together as a team. Our Housekeeping team are working tirelessly, our patient kitchens are still open and the clinical team is keeping people safe with high-end care. I couldn’t be prouder of them all.

“I know how hard it is for people in the current environment but a donation of £20 could support a nurse for an hour. That makes an enormous difference to the Beacon and the care we provide, which is rated as Outstanding by the CQC.”

While participants may donate if they wish to the Sussex Beacon’s efforts (the charity has kept its doors open throughout the crisis for those living with HIV and their dependents or relatives) the main aim is to spread the word about how thankful the community is for the efforts of healthcare workers across all of East and West Sussex.

To watch the video, visit: www.sussexbeacon.org.uk/bop-for-the-beacon-dance/ and www.youtube.com/watch?v=CwwWq1o-_5g

For more info, visit: www.sussexbeacon.org

BODY TALK FROM MISS DISNEY

Maria Gardner aka Miss Disney exudes body confidence. Here, she shares some positive words to help those struggling during lockdown…

Has anyone else been seeing tonnes of adverts from gym instructors telling people to do indoor workouts to keep weight off? And has anyone else felt guilty for the food they’re eating during this current situation, whether it’s that fave takeaway to a really cheesy pasta ‘cause we feel sad? I feel you, beauties. I’ve had a few days where I’ve felt guilty for the odd pizza, the ice cream I’ve consumed and just the overall lack of movement. My brain started to bully my body, but this post is a fight back. Don’t let your brain win, take that gorgeous photo of yourself and liberate that sexy bod of yours. It was sexy before COVID, and it’s still sexy now.

I’m quite shocked and offended at the level of adverts I’ve come across making people feel ashamed for not doing workouts. If you’re looking at this as an opportunity to jump on the weight loss wagon, do what your heart desires, I support you, but don’t feel you have to if you’re not wanting to do this for yourself. Fitness is not and should not be just be about losing weight, if you don’t want to do exercise especially during this stressful time, it’s okay!

Society is still poisoned by the idea that gaining weight is terrible and losing weight is wonderful. Don’t let society send this dangerous message to you. Food no matter the circumstances should be enjoyed without guilt - but I appreciate this is harder than it should be. Stay strong my darlings, we got this!
KATHY CATON NAMED IN VISIBLE LESBIAN 100 LIST

Since 2008 there has been a Lesbian Visibility Day but why have a day when you can have a whole week? Diva magazine felt the same way too, so that is exactly what we had from March 20-26, 2020. Part of Lesbian Visibility Week has been the publication of the Visible Lesbian 100. This highlights “women who have made great strides for the LGBTQ+ community”. The list covers a wide range of areas from sport to music, celebrity, influencers, politics and the business world. One of those included on the list is Kathy Caton from Brighton, the founder and managing director of Brighton Gin, who can be heard on BBC Radio Sussex and Radio Reverb.

Talking about the Visible Lesbian 100, Kathy believes it is “a really carefully considered and put together list”. For her, an important element of the Visible Lesbian 100 is that it doesn’t just “praise and highlight media stars like Clare Balding, Sue Perkins and Brighton & Hove’s very own Heather Peace” but also covers different fields such as sports, politics and, in her case, business, recognising the importance of her work at Brighton Gin.

“I work in an industry that is and always has been massively male dominated, so by sheer virtue of being a female-run distillery, we’re already unusual, and as far as I know, we’re the only predominantly LGBTQ+ distillery that there is. I came out fairly late and it was an incredibly difficult process, personally and professionally. “I couldn’t go back to the job I was doing at the time and it turned my entire life upside down. I really, really wish that as a younger person (sadly I was at school during Section 28) I could have seen many more visible role models, and see them leading successful, happy, fulfilling lives. That phrase that you cannot be what you cannot see resonates with me and I wish I’d been able to have those role models and see those visible women. I think it would have given me courage and impetus to be who I am sooner.”

“Basically, I’m unbelievably honoured and genuinely proud to be listed on it - and to show that lesbians and queer people can succeed in all fields, no matter how straight and male-dominated those industries might appear to be at first sight!”

Also important to Kathy is that the list isn’t just dominated by a couple of areas of the UK. “It’s also fantastic and really positive that they’ve looked all around the UK and not been purely London/Manchester centric - they’ve done a great job of it and it’s been really thoroughly researched,” said Kathy.

For more information about Brighton Gin, visit: www.brightongin.com

To view the full Lesbian Visibility list, visit: www.lesbianvisibilityweek.com/visible-lesbian-100.html#/

DIVA UNVEILS LARGEST PIECE OF RESEARCH FOR LGBTQ+ WOMEN

DIVA Media Group, the publishers of DIVA magazine, in partnership with The Advocate, have released the results of the inaugural Lesbian Visibility Week (which took place April 20-26, 2020) survey, the largest piece of research recognising, celebrating and supporting lesbian, non-binary lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender, intersex and queer women across the UK and beyond. In partnership with Kantar, DIVA received over 1,400 responses to the survey, answering questions from a broad range of topics including lifestyle, identity, relationships, family, travel and financial topics.

Key findings from this year’s survey include:

- Mental health: The results from this survey revealed that 43% suffer from stress and anxiety and 35% suffer from mental health related issues. While this survey was done prior to the Covid-19 crisis forcing lockdowns, DIVA is hearing directly from readers of all ages, who are struggling with isolation. They are certainly hearing early indications around the importance of inclusive health and well-being support.

- Safety: LGBTQ+ women feel safest at home, and report experiences of feeling anxious and unsafe in public spaces, partially resulting from past experiences.

- The workplace: Overall findings indicate that LGBTQ+ women face several struggles in the workplace, including not feeling emotionally supported at work, feeling ‘othered’ within the workplace culture, being surrounded by non-inclusive language and being a ‘minority within a minority’ within a male-dominated and heteronormative environment.

- Family: Among those with children, 36% claim to have experienced homophobia from other parents and 36% claim their children have been victims of homophobia due to their parents’ sexual orientation.

- LGBTQ+ Spaces: 79% of LGBTQ+ women feel that gay men have more visibility than they do. Many LGBTQ+ women feel that there are not enough events for them, with one in three claiming that there are not enough LGBTQ+ events aimed at their interests and this was a barrier to them attending LGBTQ+ events.

Coming out: The research shows generational shifts around coming of age and coming out. 52% of LGBTQ+ women came out aged 19 or older, while 29% came out aged under 18.

Gender Identity: There are disparities between the experiences of transgender women and their cisgender counterparts across the themes explored, this was more apparent when asked about work and safety in public spaces.

“I hope that Lesbian Visibility Week becomes an integral part of the LGBTQ+ calendar going forward, ensuring LGBTQ+ women remain a visible part of the LGBTQ+ community and receive the recognition and celebration we deserve.”

Linda Riley, publisher of DIVA magazine, said: “I’m delighted that DIVA Media Group has launched the inaugural Lesbian Visibility Week. The DIVA research really highlights the challenges that LGBTQ+ women face; feeling invisible and unsupported in key areas of their lives. A standout point in the research was finding out that 36% of LGBTQ+ parents told us that their children had been targeted with homophobic abuse which highlights just how much we still need to do to achieve equality – not just for ourselves but for our children too.”

For more info about Lesbian Visibility Week, visit: www.lesbianvisibilityweek.com

For more info about Diva, visit: www.divamag.co.uk
LOCAL NOMINEES FOR NATIONAL DIVERSITY AWARDS ANNOUNCED

Many of our local LGBTQ+ groups and community role models have been nominated for this year’s National Diversity Awards (NDAs), which celebrate unity in society and will take place in Liverpool later this year.

The NDAs, which are voted for by the general public, celebrate the achievements of charities, role models and community heroes that tackle the issues in today’s society, giving them recognition for their dedication and hard work. Local LGBTQ+ groups and individuals that have been nominated so far include: Community Organisation (LGBT): Allsorts Youth Project, which supports and empowers children and young people under 26 who are lesbian, gay, bisexual, trans or unsure (LGBTU) of their sexual orientation; Out To Swim South, LGBTQ+ and allies swimming club; My Generation, an ongoing film project focusing on trans lives and trans experiences. Positive Role Model (LGBT): Jessica Kellgren, Jessica Out of the Closet; Kate Everall, Lesbemums; Harri Weeks, the National LGB&T Partnership; Joanne Monck, Joseph Harwood.

Iain Gowers, from Out To Swim South, said: “We’re very proud of our nomination for the award. For over a year and half we’ve worked to make our Brighton swim team more diverse and inclusive, from changing our photos used to including information regarding body diversity, highlighting our female swimmers, and including information for trans and disabled swimmers on our website. We’re currently rolling this out to our other branches and always looking at what we can do next.”

Effie Fowler, fundraiser at Allsorts Youth Project, said: “We’re absolutely thrilled to be nominated for a National Diversity Award. We wholeheartedly value the support we see and feel from our community and are deeply thankful to those who have nominated us. As a youth-led LGBTQ+ charity, it is truly moving to see the resilience, creativity and talents of Allsorts children and young people acknowledged and celebrated on a national scale. We thoroughly look forward to the event and again, thank our supporters for this opportunity.”

Fox Fisher and Owl, co-directors of My Generation, said: “My Generation’s message has always been one of positivity and to show trans people overcoming obstacles and living their life as their most authentic selves. As a non-profit and volunteer trans-led organisation, we’re delighted to be nominated for the National Diversity Awards. It doesn’t only mean recognition for us and the work we do, but for all the people working with us and all our wonderful contributors who have made the world a better place by telling their stories. Thanks to everyone for their support and votes.”

Joanne Monck, nominated in the Positive Role Model category, said: “I’m now legally female after transitioning in 2014 at the age of 58. I live in Brighton and truly humbled to have been nominated. I’m really excited and hope to get on the shortlist. Everything I do is on a voluntary basis. I give a lot of support to Sussex Police, as an independent advisor and hate crime ambassador and serve on several scrutiny panels and reference groups empowering the police to become more sympathetic to the needs of the LGBTQ+ community. I also serve as an advisor for the Crown Prosecution Service with my ultimate goal of enabling through it legislation to be changed in relation to hate incidents and hate crime on social media.

“I’m a Stonewall schools role model visiting schools and talking to students about my life and that it’s okay to be who you want to be. After receiving some vitriolic hate on social media, I established a support group on Facebook to advise and help others who have found themselves in a similar situation.

“I’m the Bluebell Heritage Railways’ equality, inclusion and diversity advisor and a national diversity mentor. I have, over the years, gained considerable respect for what I do for the community and frequently get asked to talk on various local radio stations.

“My passion for creating awareness and understanding of the LGBTQ+ community and their rights to be treated with dignity and respect is the reason I believe I’ve been nominated. This work is all done while carrying the burden of a life-threatening medical condition.”

The deadline for nominations is Monday, May 18, 2020. To see a full list of nominees or to nominate a community group or hero, visit www.nationaldiversityawards.co.uk

For more info on Allsorts Youth Project, visit: www.allsortsyouth.org.uk

For more info on Out To Swim, visit: www.outtoswim.org/brighton

For more info on My Generation, visit: www.mygenderation.com
THE VIEW FROM PARLIAMENT

Brighton Rainbow Fund chair Chris Gull interviews Brighton & Hove’s three MPs about how they are continuing to handle business in the wake of the coronavirus pandemic.

PETER KYLE MP
HOVE AND PORTSLADE
THE LABOUR PARTY

With the virtual Parliament we won’t yet have full debates. We haven’t figured voting out yet, so to start with we’re going to do the very basics.

There are things that do just need to change. Voting is one of them, but there’s a flip side to everything and that’s why we need to have a debate about it. When we’re voting it’s the only time every MP has to be in one place and it’s an amazing chance for MPs to meet other MPs.

Let me give an example. I had a constituent who went to Thailand and she died in Thailand. We didn’t know whether it was suspicious circumstances. The family went to Thailand and told me they were having real difficulty with the Foreign Office, which I contacted but didn’t get to speak to the Foreign Secretary. The family were in dire straits and stranded abroad grieving.

Now there was a vote and I thought, I’m going to stand outside the exit and wait for the Foreign Secretary to come through, and I grabbed him and said: “Dominic I need 10 seconds of your time.” I was able to go back to the family and say: “I have spoken directly to the Foreign Secretary, I have put your points directly to him.”

If we were voting electronically that exchange would be impossible. That’s not a reason not to reform but the way you do things in the House of Commons sometimes isn’t really logical, but when you learn it you realise it’s a system that actually has merits.

We reorganised the team way before the lockdown. As soon as we saw where this was heading I stopped coming into London because it was very difficult to socially distance. Don’t forget we had the first outbreak in Brighton & Hove and the so-called super spreader was one of my constituents. This was in the very beginning in February, so it was testing and contact tracing. Bear in mind how stunningly effective that first strategy was. There were seven residents who caught coronavirus – not one of them passed it on to a single person.

“Don’t forget we had the first outbreak in Brighton & Hove and the so-called super spreader was one of my constituents”

There was an avalanche of correspondence because people were worried about public health, schooling, people with disabilities… Government was quick to give broad advice, slow to give specific advice, so people didn’t know what their specific recommended advice was.

At the same time it’s having a massive knock-on effect for businesses. That awful period where they told people not to visit pubs and clubs and restaurants but didn’t shut them. That’s what the government really misunderstood and underestimated. When lockdown happened, supporting people with the economic impact has been the biggest challenge.

People call and contact by email and we have good systems for that, but there’s been this thing where, because we live in the world where we have Twitter, Facebook and Instagram, I get bombarded with direct messages. Sometimes you’ll get a message from someone saying “I’m in real difficulties”. When you start to catch up you see an hour later “Why don’t you reply?” and then two hours later “You’re my MP”, and then “I’ll never vote for you again”.

This is the message that’s come by Instagram and gone into the pile of things you just don’t see and it’s heartbreaking because I want every person that contacts me to get a response.

We’ve got to have economic recovery but we also have to have public health recovery. It’s not going to be until we can have a vaccine or some kind of system with treating coronavirus, then we’re not going to be able to suddenly go back to where we were.

We have to breathe life back into our local economy and, this very important point, do we go back to business as normal? No! I don’t want to go back to the way our economy was. We have this thing now that’s brought our economy to a standstill which is the perfect opportunity to start rethinking.

Watch the full conversation with Peter Kyle: https://youtu.be/aX6tFUe0Quku

CAROLINE LUCAS MP
BRIGHTON PAVILION
THE GREEN PARTY

These are strange times and I’m so grateful for my team around me. They are also working from home but the volume of work the officers have been dealing with has been overwhelming, and I guess the thing is just being aware of so much fear and worry that people have, whether about their loved ones or their jobs. These are really scary times.

Mostly we’re dealing with emails because most people are contacting us in that way. One of the biggest issues has been about the government’s programme for self-employed people. Our city is so dependent on a vibrant self-employed sector and there are lots of holes in that piece of legislation in terms of the people that don’t quite meet the criteria. To be fair, ministers have made themselves available and there’s been an awful lot of lobbying around things like ensuring the banks start getting money out to people that need it.
Of course all the underlying stuff in people's lives that is not really Covid-19 related is happening as well, and people are frustrated at not being able to get answers about those kind of things, whether it's in the health service or social services, but it's not easy for anybody.

I'm looking forward to being able to hold the government properly to account, because clearly, although some committees have been meeting remotely, it's not the same as being able to eyeball a minister and get the publicity you get when you really put a minister on the spot. I am passionate about shifting to electronic voting. It's ridiculous that if you have six votes it takes an hour and a half, whereas with electronic voting it'd take a minute.

It's important to have people when we can in Parliament being able to stand up in the normal way and hold government to account, but certainly I think what this is showing is that it is possible to be innovative.

It's vital that we don't return to business as usual because for the vast majority of people business as usual wasn't working. We have grotesque levels of inequality, an NHS that has been shown to be on the edge in terms of resources, so we need to learn the lessons this crisis has shown us about resilience in our country and the bottom line is that our country is not resilient. Our NHS system has been stripped of resources over the past years, austerity has shredded the social fabric.

We've just seen how desperate people are and how it hasn't taken very much to push them into it into a really intolerable situation. I hope we all learn that we need to invest in our public services, and we can see that the money is there when government wants to use it. We need to hammer home the idea that it is possible to be innovative.

It's easy to enforce a lockdown when we have nice weather but if we are getting a really hot summer, it's going to be really difficult to enforce some of this lockdown. We may have to lift some restrictions for some level of social distancing. There's some limited evidence that it might reduce in the summer because of the way it reacts to weather, so it might be that we open up a bit in the summer and then have to lock down again in the winter. I don't think anyone should expect the lockdown to be completely over anytime soon, I think we're talking about after September.

Where there's any chance there will be some restrictions, that creates a real problem for our local economy, which is tourist and entertainment based and makes its profits from the period of the Brighton Festival in May until October. If we miss that period but they end up finishing the restrictions, say, in January next year, our economy in Brighton is going to have a real problem. How will they survive between January and May without some extra support? We've got to think specifically about the problems in Brighton which are not unique to, but are particular to, the LGBTQ+ businesses.

A hybrid Parliament is what they're talking about at the moment. We've got to see how it works, but the minimum requirement is that you should be able to ask questions and you should be able to vote from home. I hope we'll be able to continue to change the way we function in Parliament, and not just in Parliament, it has consequences for how we all work.

There are two scenarios about how we go forward. We could just go back to normal, or we could embrace some of the changes. There are some real positives to this. One is that we are travelling less and are able to connect more now.

The other thing is a respect for the workers who really make society work. I think it will refocus us to understand the cleaners, nurses, shop workers and carers who are often some of the worst paid, but it requires political will to make sure the positive bits are taken and not just the negative bits about giving police more powers and surveillance using our phones. There are choices that can be made but if we don't talk about it now it'll be too late by the time we come out of it.

“IT'S GREAT TO SEE GOVERNMENT MINISTERS OUT CLAPPING NHS STAFF BUT THEY NEED TO START PAYING AND VALUING THEM PROPERLY”

I think too that we’ve recognised how important those people who have come from other countries to work in our health system are. We owe them such a debt, and I hope we’ll get away from that horrible immigration rhetoric.
LGBTQ+ Ageing

The theme for this month’s issue had already been long set when the coronavirus crisis and subsequent lockdown hit the world. So it’s fair to say there was no lack of tumbleweed blowing through Gscene Towers at the editorial meeting (via Zoom) to discuss how ‘ageing’ can be viewed as a force for positivity. As ever, our LGBTQ communities have responded with their trademark upbeat attitude in the face of challenging times and we hope you’ll agree the following features demonstrate the humour, optimism and resilience that has always defined us. Not only that, they are thought-provoking, uplifting and insightful, coming as they do from a range of ages, genders and sexualities. Ageing is something that begins from the day we are born and which takes on different meanings at different stages of life. You’re likely to find in the following pages perspectives you had never previously considered and we hope you enjoy reading them and discovering something new about yourselves and our queer family as we all adjust to this way of living that no one – whatever their age – could have seen coming.

Stay safe and keep doing and embracing the amazing things this difficult time has precipitated.

GROWING OLD GRATEFULLY

Jane Traies on the trials and tribulations of growing up lesbian in the second half of the 20th century, and the joy of seeing the changes that have made the queer world what it is today. By Jaq Bayles

When I call locally-based historian and author Jane Traies, she has just been discussing with an elderly neighbour how people who have had more years to get used to living alone seem to be dealing with lockdown better. There’s no escaping the grimness of the situation, but Jane is as vibrant as ever, juggling several projects, and while coronavirus is the subject that tops and tails our chat, its mention is fleeting as we get to the issue at hand.

Now 75, Jane has lived through many of the defining moments of queer history – most of which she never thought she’d see. So did she and her peers think about growing old when they were in the first flush of youth?

“If we did it was only in a very general way, but I do clearly remember something I said to my girlfriend when we were in our 20s. We were very poor students, doing waitressing, and tobacconist – so how true to life was the recent popular BBC2 series Back in Time for the Corner Shop? She and her friends had watched with interest and, while proclaiming it “oversimplified”, Jane says it did show what huge changes have taken place. “But I hate that romanticism of a so-called simpler time. It’s crap. Austerity was no fun in the 1940s. A lot of people were traumatised – what we’d now call PTSD – there was rationing, everything was still in black and white. I get very angry about that white-apron, cupcake view of the time – it was not like that.” That being said: “We’re so lucky. My generation say ‘what old lady’s legs are these?’, because that’s not how I think about myself. I sometimes think ‘no one knows I have long black hair’, because I don’t anymore. It’s your body that tells you you’re old. But also there are now so many stories and memories you realise you must have lived quite a long time to have those.”

During that journey Jane hit an unexpected milestone which meant she has “had a whole new life”. “My long-term partnership broke up when I was 60 and it took away all the ideas I’d previously had of what old age would be like. I had to reinvent myself, I moved to Brighton. I’m so lucky – I’ve lovely friends, I’m completely ‘out’, I’ve lots to do and I’m really enjoying old age in a way I never thought I would. I could never imagine where and how I would be living.”

What are you looking forward to right now? “I’m looking forward to being able to come out of isolation and get together with my family again – my blood family and my queer family.”

And so it’s full circle to where our talk began and the unprecedented situation the world finds itself in. “However old you are there are things that can still surprise you.”

MORE INFO

Jane Traies is the author of The Lives Of Older Lesbians: Sexuality, Identity And The Life Course, and Now You See Me: Lesbian Life Stories and @JaneTraies
Hanni Pidduck on what she thought she saw coming… and what she never expected

I haven’t ‘failed’ just because I haven’t got myself ‘wifed up’... this isn’t the 1950s and for now my mum is very content having ‘grandkittens’

WHEN I GROW UP I WANT TO BE...

Ten years ago, if you’d asked me what life would look like at 26 I’d have painted quite a picture: living in an LA style penthouse in a cinematically idealistic city where I was wildly successful and surrounded by a gorgeous network of queer friends, think L Word seasons three and four. Married? Definitely. Children? Probably. Basically, just nailing life.

I’d never have imagined the weird and wonderful life I live now. I’m an aspiring musician in a band called ARXX, living in a little cottage on the fringe of Brighton, with my 20-something bestie (who yes, happens to be my ex, and maybe 20-something is generous), and two cats and a tortoise we own together.

One thing I did foresee was that I’ve wound up with a beautiful queer chosen family (mostly exes), but who was I kidding thinking I’d be settled down by now? The blissful ignorance and heteronormativity is adorable, but coming from a particularly white and conservative pocket of the English countryside it is fair to say that, for a young teenage lesbian like me, my horizons only stretched as far as the worlds laid out to me in Skins and Lip Service, and the rest was a great big unknown.

I think for the majority of people from the LGBTQ+ community, growing up and ageing plays out pretty differently to our straight counterparts. This has definitely been true for me. The transition into adulthood hasn’t been about starting my future, it’s been undoing the layers of my identity that were created to protect myself and appease other people. It’s been unearthing the internalised shame and resentment that I was unknowingly holding on to. It’s been acknowledging the years of invalidation and repression, which are all forms of trauma.

The learning curve of adulthood has been steep and unrelenting. I’ve learned how effective communication can change everything, that there’s more to sexuality than gay and straight and that I feel way more comfortable identifying as queer. I’ve learned that my gut emotions are never wrong, that having a therapist is normal, and that blue cheese is really expensive.

Only now, at 26, do I feel like I’m finally starting. Only now do I feel confident enough, assertive enough, sure enough, and worthy enough to create the life that I’ve always wanted for myself. I can’t say this is true for everyone, but I’ve spoken to enough LGBTQ+ friends to know that it’s not just me. The love and acceptance I feel for myself now is a result of engaging with my baggage head on, but the environment I live within has definitely helped. Brighton is a bubble, and it only takes a couple of stops on the train for that to become apparent.

But, without belittling the struggles I’ve experienced, I know I’m part of a generation who are incredibly lucky to be experiencing all of this in the time and place I am. My friends and I all remember the day when same-sex marriage was legalised. I was 20 years old. I remember looking at my partner at the time as they said, “maybe we should get married?” and me laughing and saying with a newfound sense of empowering freedom “No, but we could one day”.

There’s no doubt joyous moments like that shifted some attitudes and brought some comfort and validation to those who longed for it. However, there’s also no doubt that moments like this came as a result of a long-fought and ongoing battle, which, as a young LGBTQ+ person, is vital to educate ourselves on. In my experience, navigating life as a queer adult in Brighton is pretty easy, and that’s an unbelievable privilege. I know people bravely paved this path, and I know that the LGBTQ+ community still needs to fight to allow a safer future for all of us.

Turning 30 always felt like this ominous event that signified the end of my youth (I’ve always been very dramatic), but now I can honestly say that it feels pretty exciting, and 30 definitely isn’t ‘old’. I still occasionally have to remind myself, in a very Bridget Jones-esque fashion, that I haven’t ‘failed’ just because I haven’t got myself ‘wifed up’, that this isn’t the 1950s and for now my mum is very content having ‘grandkittens’. Of course, there are still social pressures. My best friend and I are often fretting about “our time running out”, whether we should seriously consider freezing our eggs, and our “if we’re not married when we’re…” agreement has reduced from 50 to 35.

As for the physical side of ageing, Tegan and Sara Quinn are literal living proof that ageing as a queer adult in Brighton is pretty easy, and I’m happy to just be figuring it out. Turning 30 always felt like this ominous event that signified the end of my youth (I’ve always been very dramatic), but now I can honestly say that it feels pretty exciting, and 30 definitely isn’t ‘old’. I still occasionally have to remind myself, in a very Bridget Jones-esque fashion, that I haven’t ‘failed’ just because I haven’t got myself ‘wifed up’, that this isn’t the 1950s and for now my mum is very content having ‘grandkittens’. Of course, there are still social pressures. My best friend and I are often fretting about “our time running out”, whether we should seriously consider freezing our eggs, and our “if we’re not married when we’re…” agreement has reduced from 50 to 35.

As for the physical side of ageing, Tegan and Sara Quinn are literal living proof that ageing only makes you more attractive, so I’m looking forward to the glow up. For me, the older I get the clearer my head feels, the less willing I am to let people cross my boundaries, and the more I feel like I have something valuable to offer. The songs I write now sound more like me, the relationships I have are so much more loving and substantial, and (dare I say it) I’m actually happier than ever being single.

Ten years ago, I thought that people in their 20s were adults who had their life together – being 26 I know that’s not quite true, and to be honest I’m happy to just be figuring it out.

MORE INFO

You can see Hanni and ARXX at www.arxxband.com
Recommended listening: MUNA, It’s Gonna Be Okay, Baby
THE AGES OF MAN

Finn reflects on how transitioning can mess with chronological time, and how time has changed the face of trans consciousness.

Age is a funny thing. I’m currently in limbo between young and old. I’m dead in gay years yet still a spring chicken among many of my peers. Age is subjective to whom you’re speaking about and to whom they’re compared.

It’s a cliché, but age is simply a number and it depends on where you’re counting from. I feel like an old man in many ways, especially in comparison to my growing family of trans folk. While it wasn’t that long ago that I came out and subsequently began a physical transition, it was before the trans ‘tipping point’ and certainly before the recent flourish of trans consciousness, when the world woke up to trans identities and when Brighton became so bountiful in trans-led organisations.

I was talking recently with a young trans man who was incredulous to whom you’re speaking about and to whom they’re compared.

Things have changed a lot in only a few years. Those years of experience have given me some kind of wisdom to pass on to others as others have done for me. Those who I consider to be my older trans brothers and sisters aren’t necessarily physically older than me. Indeed the man I consider to be my trans big brother is actually a year younger than me. Like a brother, I looked up to him and followed his example when I came to the realisation of my own transness. And there are trans people who are much older in years than me that I consider to be little siblings, due to their relative age in transition.

Puberty the first time was an interesting challenge. The second time, however, was dizzying and reset the clock in many ways – or rather, set the clock ticking on the rest of my life. I felt like I had lost a decade to muddling through, working out who I was and trying to do something about it. I recall once a year some, trying to be relevant, teacher at my school would read out the lyrics to Pink Floyd’s *Time*, to teach us as teenagers that youth is not eternal. As I age, the lyrics of that song haunt me. In some respects, I missed the starting gun.

Testosterone has had the odd effect of simultaneously ageing me and bestowing a new-found youth. The rejuvenating effects of testosterone are well publicised in titles such as *Men’s Health* magazine. But what they don’t discuss is how a furrowed brow and scruff on my face have added years. Looking like a teenage boy for most of my 20s, I gradually began to age exponentially with every shot of testosterone. After 10 years of it, and now at 37, I’m often mistaken, according to my Grindr research, for being a decade younger. It’s almost as though I was barely legal when I was given my first shot.

I might be a decade behind but that also gives me cover to make up for the lost time of discovering what it is to be a queer man in this part of the world. Especially in a queer world where, regardless of age we have daddy/son dynamics, age gap relationships are much more commonplace and we can live like Peter Pan in Neverland (otherwise known as Brighton). Forever young and not really taking anything seriously. The goalposts have moved as we’ve gotten older. Expectations on having a family have crept up on many of my peers who are able to do such things. Buying a house is a pipe dream for my generation now. Middle age now starts in your mid-40s. But how is it that my knees can be this dodgy and yet I’m still not considered as middle aged?

The trans experience isn’t all hormone-fuelled youthful vigour. The years lost to crippling self doubt and the wear and tear of systemic and daily doses of transphobia have taken their toll on me. As we learn more about minority stress theory and its effect on the health and wellbeing of minorities, including LGBT+ people of all stripes, I am aware of how it has affected me.

Looking to the future, despite the gains we have made as a community, I don’t feel massively optimistic. My concern is for my health and who will be around to look after me if I reach an age that requires it. I fear for when I might need personal care and being reliant on underpaid workers, who could quite possibly not treat me with dignity and respect because of my trans body. It’s not such a far-fetched fear either, as currently it can be hit and miss to get that dignity and respect even now when I access healthcare.

Worse still, my greatest fear is to end my days with dementia and forgetting that I transitioned, even if for just a moment. Reliving those dark days would be extremely distressing. In some respects, I don’t know how likely that fetched fear either, as currently it can be hit and miss to get that dignity and respect even now when I access healthcare.

If anything good comes out of the pandemic, I hope that we will emerge with a society that is more caring for all, with stronger communities, which help each other out. That people who care for others are given the resources they deserve and in turn we are all able to respect one another more than we currently do.

“My greatest fear is to end my days with dementia and forgetting that I transitioned, even if for just a moment. Reliving those dark days would be extremely distressing”
DIFFERENT TIMES,
DIFFERENT LIVES

Change has been a theme throughout writer Freiya Benson’s life to date, and she’s still full of questions as to the future.

The first time I transitioned I was in my early 20s. I say transitioned here, but what I really mean is attempted to transition. It didn’t work out at the time, not because I wasn’t trans, but more just because the world was a different place back then – back then being in the early 1990s. I often think about that time, especially now that I’m older. It’s hard not to think about what would have been different if I’d persevered rather than giving up, because it was so hard. I transitioned again, this time for good, in my early 30s, which isn’t old exactly but, still, you can’t help but think, what if I did this earlier?

It’s a funny thing, this ageing. For me it almost feels like I’ve lived two lives, both valid, but also both very different. I try to look at the period before my transition as my time for laying the groundwork, or foundation, for the person I am today.

It was hard for sure, and it took a very long time – sometimes it feels like too long – but equally I wouldn’t be who I am today without that time spent. It’s sort of like a bittersweet pill, because now I’m living authentically as who I should have been from the start, but also there’s a deep sadness for the things I’ll never experience, the rites of passage that were missed and the alternate life I didn’t get to have.

These things though can haunt us and never let go, so I try not to dwell on them. Loss is one of those complex emotions, so it’s not always easy, but learning to acknowledge and mourn while still making space to live is important. Time keeps on going forward, and we flow with it, keeping on keeping on.

I love so much about where and how we are now though. I love all the new words we have to describe ourselves: trans, genderqueer, genderfluid, non-binary, demi. It’s remarkable for me, coming from a time when the only word used regularly was transsexual. Having the language to describe yourself in more detail, to find words that fit, be they older terms or newer ones, is empowering and gives you ownership over who you are. Labels are so often thrust upon us by others, so to choose what you use, if anything, is important in claiming back who we are.

There’s been so much change too. I’m well on my way to being 50 now, and it warms my heart to see so many of us out there, all doing our thing. It’s powerful and amazing to know you’re not alone. When I was younger I was convinced I was the only person in the world who was trans. I didn’t know anyone else who had the feelings I had about my gender identity. No one spoke about it – not my friends, my family, my teachers, no one.

Not having a frame of reference for who you are is tough as a young person. Feelings of being different to everyone else are pretty universal, but thinking that you’re different and then having it confirmed because there’s no one else like you is a heavy thing to carry, even if it turns out it’s just your perspective at the time.

As I’ve gotten older I’ve discovered I’m not alone, that there are others out there like me, and that in turn has become the spark that helps me to try to live my best life, trying to be as kind as I can, despite the negative things I come up against.

It sometimes feels like there are a lot of people out there telling us that we don’t exist, that we’re all delusional orrenders. They base their assumptions about us on their experiences, believing that their privilege as the majority makes what they know the truth. You can’t be real, they say, because we’ve never experienced what you’re saying to be your truth.

“It’s a funny thing, this ageing. For me it almost feels like I’ve lived two lives, both valid, but also both very different”

They struggle to see that identity is personal and unique to each individual, that it’s not something to be homogenised or crushed because it’s different. We’re seen as this new and dangerous thing, to be pushed back against, even though we’ve always been here, right from the beginning, it’s just that we weren’t seen before. Being seen can be powerful, but it can also be exposing, and as a trans person who has lived through this change, from zero visibility to almost overexposure, it sometimes feels so complex to get my head round.

As I get older I think about this stuff a lot. Will we become so visible that we become just another aspect of what it means to be human? What will being trans look like in 20 years’ time? More importantly, will I look like in 20 years’ time?

I wonder if the melancholia I sometimes feel, about getting older, about being trans, will ever fully integrate with the peace and underlying joy I also feel about these things. Again, I also wonder if this is just me feeling this as well. I think why, despite ticking off all the things on my imaginary trans to-do list, do I still feel sad sometimes? Is this a trans thing, an age thing, or just a life thing?

I’m not sure of the answers to these questions, although I’m hoping really striking white hair features in one of them (think Daenerys Targaryen, but old and trans). What I do know is that it doesn’t really matter what age you are, there will always be questions, some with answers, some without, and all we can really do is keep on being true to ourselves, living our best lives and being as kind as we are able.

MORE INFO
For more info about Freiya, visit: //freiyabenson.wordpress.com/about/
VOICES FROM HEAR US OUT

Hear Us Out is a new verbatim theatre festival celebrating the lives of older LGBTQ+ people. Over the past year New Writing South has been collecting the stories of older LGBTQ+ people across south east England and is now working with a community collective of writers and performers to turn these stories into pieces of performance.

The project has changed slightly due to the Covid-19 situation. The performances were originally due to take place in residential homes, day centres, Pride events, libraries and museums, with the main production taking place at Brighton’s Sallis Benney Theatre, but all of this is currently on hold.

Lee Smith on a rich diversity of experiences

Having collected around 30 stories from older LGBTQ+ people that will be used by writers and performers to create pieces of performance, we also wanted to get the perspective of younger people. We held workshops with Blueprint 22’s Inside Out group to share the stories we’ve collected and discuss their own attitudes towards ageing.

In one of our sessions a young person shared something that particularly resonated with me – that they did not expect to have lived as long as they have.

I think this will probably be quite a relatable feeling within the LGBTQ+ community. Whether through suicide, violence or health and wealth inequalities, a lot of us don’t expect to and aren’t statistically likely to live as long as our cisgendered, heterosexual counterparts. So working with a group of alive and kicking older LGBTQ+ people has felt really celebratory, that LGBTQ+ people can and do live long and fulfilled lives and have stories that need to be heard.

Another thing I’ve really cherished, as a younger trans person, is meeting and working with older trans people who are flourishing in their lives and identities. It busts the myth perpetuated in the media that being trans is something new and made up by millennials. Trans people have always and will always exist and under the right circumstances can and do flourish.

It also came up in our discussions with Blueprint 22’s Inside Out group that having older LGBTQ+ role models is really important. Hearing the stories of older LGBTQ+ people who have careers, relationships and families proves to younger LGBTQ+ people that these things are obtainable for them (if they so want them).

The project is spearheaded by a steering group comprising older LGBTQ+ people and organisations which work specifically with older LGBTQ+ people, such as Switchboard’s older people’s project Older & Out, and Eastbourne Rainbow. "Another thing that really stuck with me was when someone in a steering group meeting said they were thankful the project was something for older people that wasn’t Vera Lynn!"

This highlights the assumptions we often make about what older people like and, with those currently reaching retirement age being born in the 1950s, wartime Vera Lynn might not be the best go-to. And when you further consider that there’s a standard offering for ‘older people’ and a standard offering for ‘LGBTQ+ people’, it feels like older LGBTQ+ people are often failed by both. So I have really valued that this project is created by older LGBTQ+ people for older LGBTQ+ people.

I think in arts and culture, we really need to make sure we’re not just catering for the usual suspects and are taking the time to listen to the wider community about what they want and need.

I’ve really valued getting to meet, know and work with this group of people I might not have met otherwise. It’s been great to see certain people engage with every aspect of the project and really benefit from it. There is a real sense of joy and community felt.

It’s also nice to see what older LGBTQ+ people are doing outside of the Brighton bubble, such as at Eastbourne Rainbow or Hastings & Rother Rainbow Alliance. After this experience, not only would I like to see more opportunities for older LGBTQ+ people but also more opportunities for intergenerational engagement.

There are always interesting discussions to be had, stories to be shared, and I think we should all make more of an effort to get together and hear each other out.

BRIDGING THE GENERATION GAP

Hear Us Out project manager Lee Smith on a rich diversity of experiences

Another thing I’ve really cherished, as a younger trans person, is meeting and working with older trans people who are flourishing in their lives and identities.”
THE NEW AGE

Hear Us Out participant Persia West on reaching a time of balance and contentment laced with unexpected new excitement

It came as a surprise one day to realise I was now in the third age of life, past both the first age of childhood and adolescence, and the second, middle bit when we work and make careers and children maybe, commute, work too hard and have a life of running round making it all happen. This stage of life might be tiring, but at least we have an identity that people, and we ourselves, can relate to. And it’s great for friendships and the fruit of labour and much more.

Like just about everyone in that stage of life, while I was living it I feared the dark doom of age, wrinkling and sagging, joints aching, descending into futile uselessness, invisibility and other myths. But just like the myths we LGBTQ+ people are subject to in the minds of others – and ourselves if we aren’t careful – they’re not exactly true.

However, in my long life I’ve spent long periods of time in India, meditating and studying their profound philosophy, and in their traditional culture this third age is a special time, when we have our lives more for ourselves than before. We can stand back and relate to. And it’s great for friendships and the fruit of labour and much more.

The idea was, and is, to have several of us older people doing something creative and performing Verbatim Theatre. What’s that, you may ask? Well, it turned into one of the most interesting things I’ve ever done. So age has its challenges, but my goodness it has its sweetness too if we have the good fortune to have decent health, enough money, and friends who count.

And where in the world better to be older and queerer than dear Brighton, sunny outside my window as I write.

**MORE INFO**

- Persia West is a writer, storyteller and meditator, follow @persiawest
- For info on Hear Us Out or New Writing South, visit: www.newwritingsouth.com, email: projectmanager@newwritingsouth.com or: newwritingsouth
- For info on Blueprint22 and Inside Out, visit: www.blueprint22.org.uk or: 22blueprint22/
- www.coastisqueer.com
- www.olderandoutbrighton.org.uk or: Older-and-Out
- www.hrra.org.uk or: HRRainbowAlliance
- www.eastbournerainbow.co.uk

“Says he can’t wait to get as old as me. Needs no talent at all, kid, just keep eating and it’ll come your way faster than you imagine”
Back in 1987 the idea of people growing old with HIV wasn’t there, because they were expected to die. 

Joyce, who lives in Brighton and became a Labour Peer in 1993, was originally a pharmacist but moved on to a career within the Labour Party and was its director of organisation from 1985 to 1993. With her longstanding interest in sexual health, Joyce has been a constant in the fight against HIV and AIDS. “Back in 1987 the idea of people growing old with HIV wasn’t there, because they were expected to die,” she says. “I remember many years ago making a speech in which I wondered about what thoughts were being given in old people’s homes to those with HIV and people looking at me as if I was bonkers. If you went out into the street and asked people if those living with HIV and people looking at me as if they were going to be old they would say ‘no’. People didn’t want to get into those discussions.”

Her first real introduction to meeting people with HIV who were getting older was through the Sussex Beacon and its respite care, and...
THE AGE OF REASON
Richard Jeneway reflects on the vagaries of life and the importance of community in times of great hardship.

I've been HIV positive for at least 25 years after diagnosis and have been unable to work ever again, which psychologically feeds the feeling of loneliness. Perhaps a reason why so many from that time shut themselves away while others just lived their lives to the full.

As a continuation of my volunteering at London Lighthouse, with encouragement from my partner I went back to college and worked for a diploma in counselling, which allowed me to continue helping vulnerable others in our community and has helped me become a better listener and gain a greater understanding of people.

As a trained mentor I have worked with four younger men, all HIV positive but with very different reasons to seek support. During my time volunteering I've found that many of our new generation in the HIV community struggle with issues that were common back when it was that age, such as chemsex and other addictions. However, thankfully large strides have been made in these younger people being accepted for their sexuality and who they are than was commonplace for my generation.

I can't now, writing this article, ignore the coronavirus crisis which has turned the world upside down. Growing numbers of cases across Asia, Europe and now the Americas have (as we know) led to millions being placed under a lockdown status and large restrictions on modern life. This has affected those with higher levels of anxiety, such as older members of the LGBTQ+ community. It's important that we as a community ensure we support and keep in touch with one another during the hard times of isolation we now find ourselves in.

As a trustee with the local HIV charity, Lunch Positive, we're in this crisis doing our part to support our important community by delivering food parcels for our most vulnerable and providing support over the phone and online.

I personally know some who haven't left their homes for many days now, nor have they had contact with other people even to talk to, so it's important to keep those lines of communication open for me and for you reading this piece.

One of the great long-term groups that has helped me is Peer Action Yoga which, during the lockdown, has moved its usual Tuesday meet-up class online, still on Tuesdays at 6pm. Alistair McCall (the yoga teacher) pays particular attention to those with mobility issues but it is open to all abilities.

I have attended this class, which spends time working on the body and the mind, for more than six years now and the impact on my mind and body – in terms of keeping not only my back flexible but giving me a better balance and posture – has been instrumental in keeping me relaxed and focused.

Alistair’s philosophy is: “The practice of yoga benefits the whole person. Practicing yoga postures, while healthy for the body, also serves to direct the attention within, creating a sense of absorption, which ultimately helps us to rediscover ourselves in our fullness as limitless and interconnected. Yoga is a journey into the heart of what makes us who we are, and therefore everyone’s invited.”

I think a crucial point to take away from this piece is to ensure that we all remain supportive of our most vulnerable and isolated, not only during a crisis but when we eventually return to business as usual. That involves not only further community engagement but ensuring that we can help ourselves by being open minded in trying new activities and learning new skills.

MORE INFO
○ Peer Action Yoga with Alistair McCall is online on Tuesdays at 6pm: www.peeraction.net
○ Lunch Positive for info on special plans including phone chats and additional food support: www.lunchpositive.org/special-plans/

“It’s important that we as a community ensure we support and keep in touch with one another during the hard times of isolation we now find ourselves in”
AGAINT ALL ODDS

An HIV diagnosis used to carry a near certainty that ageing would not be on the agenda. But times have changed – and even some of those who contracted the disease early on are reaching a far greater age than predicted. The Sussex Beacon’s David Fray talks to Jaq Bayles about living beyond expectations.

The process of growing older can be responsible for triggering a huge variety of issues, emotional and physical, from the trivia of vanity to the fundamentals of serious health concerns. But while such things may play lightly on the minds of healthy younger generations, there has been in the LGBTQ+ community one well-documented group of people who, having hit their mid-20s, never expected to face any of the joys or challenges of an old age.

An HIV diagnosis from the mid-1980s till the mid-1990s was considered pretty much a death sentence, yet, while many of course did succumb, there are others who beat the odds and who are, today, living with the disease and continuing to thrive in an age they never thought they would see.

Among this band of men living in Brighton is David Fray, who runs the Sussex Beacon Service User Forum, aimed at offering advice and policy suggestions from participants around services. Last year’s main body of work was to help meet new inpatients’ expectations, while this year it is looking at services, including, according to some, symptoms of early ageing.

David is a participant in the POPPY study, which is investigating early age-related problems in people living with HIV. The two-year study at Imperial College London finished in July 2019. “I was in the control group – the ones that were expected not to age. 50+ is big age range. Until the study data is published there is uncertainty about HIV-related accelerated ageing. Doctors are a cautious bunch who understandably make decisions based on evidence, but I can say that the people I know living with HIV think they are ageing sooner than expected.”

“I and other patients believe anti-etrovirals have caused changes, including the redistribution of body fat – lipoatrophy/lipoatrophy [the latter which causes localised loss of facial fat]. You used to be able to tell if someone was HIV just by looking at their face.”

David suffered this effect himself in his early 30s, as the pictures show, and says: “It was really affecting my self esteem. I hadn’t told my parents I was HIV positive and I didn’t want to send pictures of myself to them.”

A treatment called New Fill (polylactic acid), which improves collagen production, helped to improve David’s appearance although it didn’t come cheap – it was difficult to obtain funding for what was considered a cosmetic procedure in a time of austerity – but it “made a big difference to people’s lives”, improving their confidence and self esteem.

The greater life expectancy now does, of course, have a knock-on effect for people who had an early HIV diagnosis. “Probably a lot of people didn’t plan for retirement, so we’re seeing a lot more living in poverty and experiencing age-related symptoms earlier because their bodies are still fighting the virus all the time and there are underlying health conditions.”

Then there are the co-morbidities, additional serious health conditions, such as diabetes and muscular skeletal problems and cardiovascular disease. “There’s the issue, especially of gay men with HIV, of finding a partner to take them on or worrying about being a carer. There’s more isolation. Older people with serious health problems are living in poverty or becoming frail, so it’s a slippery slope to death.”

In order to try to help combat frailty, the Sussex Beacon set up a Positive Fitness Class, a 10-week course during which people set their own goals, monitored by a physiotherapist if they are showing frailty by 50. “It might be a simple goal of wanting to touch their toes by end of 10 weeks,” says David, who himself suffers degenerative disc disease, along with diabetes and non-alcoholic fatty liver disease (NAFLD), “which are attributed to antiretroviral (ARV) HIV medication. I can’t prove it but think it’s to do with taking antiretrovirals some decade or so ago – but I’d rather be alive than dead.”

The Beacon also runs an eight-week Mindfulness course, which David says “has helped me and other people cope with chronic pain, depression and anxiety.”

He has been using the Beacon for around 23 years, having been an inpatient in the mid-1990s. Now, he says, despite the health conditions brought about by HIV and some of the therapies around it, “we can look forward to a bright future. Getting tested and getting diagnosed is one of the best things you can do. You can even have a family. I should hopefully live to my 80s, but I still don’t know what I want to be when I grow up...”

**MORE INFO**

- [www.sussexbeacon.org.uk](http://www.sussexbeacon.org.uk)
- [thesussexbeacon](https://thesussexbeacon)
- [sussexbeacon](http://sussexbeacon)
LIVING WELL BEYOND AIDS

Guy, a 71-year-old, relates his story of living through the darkest days of AIDS and the efforts he made to live with and explore the challenges of the time.

In 1985 I was diagnosed with a form of arthritis which was so painful that I could barely walk and was admitted to hospital in Paddington where I was isolated.

The hospital doctor knew I liked paintings, so one day he mentioned his own collection then casually but gently told me I had HTLV (the name then). I was shocked. I had been careful sexually because knowledge of HIV transmission was limited. Did I contract it before it became widespread? Who knows?

Friends visited (I wasn’t quarantined as such) who knew the diagnosis was not great – two years earlier I had been to a friend’s funeral who had died of AIDS. Re-reading copies of letters written to friends back then I was more scared than I now remember.

Discharged after six weeks and still unsteady, I met a friend who introduced me to yoga and a group which gave me confidence and brought balance to my life – literally.

In 1986 I met three remarkable men empowering people who had been diagnosed and who founded London Lighthouse, a visionary centre and hospice for people with HIV and AIDS in west London. The workshops there brought hope and positivity at a time of discrimination and loss.

In the late 1980s, I joined groups in the HIV community and others addressing spiritual and psychological needs and was introduced to the Edward Carpenter Community, which organised residential weeks for gay men in the countryside – a lifeline and still going strong.

A very close friend, Tony, and I helped to organise a week for HIV gay men at one of these events. We were a loving community and felt great loyalty to one another while living with the drama of illness and dying.

Though I began a psychotherapy course my energy was fading, but I resisted taking medication.

Given an AIDS diagnosis in 1992 with T-cells below 200 I was prescribed a drug to prevent me getting pneumonia. The reality of AIDS hit me each week I had my dose of pentamidine at the clinic.

Fortunately I became very involved with a group following a spiritual path, which opened up new horizons for me and for which I am ever grateful. It gave me a life beyond HIV and AIDS while remaining firmly rooted in the community – acknowledging the possibility of death and dying but finding ways to live and love too.

Many friends and past partners died during this time. Once, visiting a friend in hospital on the spur of the moment and finding that he was in a coma surrounded by his parents and close friend it became clear he was dying. Ian was a handsome man and remained so as he died. It was an honour to be present and included – but hard too and not the only time I witnessed a dying friend.

Then we could be with friends and support them, but today people are dying with Covid-19 and sadly can’t be with their friends, partners or family.

By 1995 I was getting very ill with an AIDS-defining illness. My energy was zero, I wasn’t eating, I spent days just watching TV or walls. It was terrible. I was on my own and everything was a tremendous effort and I was living in denial. Friends assumed I was managing. Was I too proud to ask for help or acknowledge how ill I was? Or too scared and confused?

Offered the new anti-retrovirals in a study and declining, I died with death. When finally I began ARV treatment it was miraculous, bringing me back from the brink. No one knew what the long-term effects would be – and there were some but, thankfully, alternatives came along as time passed and treatments are now much easier to take.

Despite the medication it didn’t prevent the death from an AIDS-defining illness of my dear friend Tony, or of my twin brother – a harsh ending to a traumatic time. Living with loss, shortly into the new millennium, I moved to Brighton after a lifetime in London – and a new chapter opened, helped by groups organised by Terrence Higgins Trust, Lunch Positive and Peer Action, among others. The Sussex Beacon, offering a Mindfulness course, has been a great support.

Recently, with my loving partner, I celebrated the second anniversary of our civil partnership.

There are many men now living with an HIV diagnosis but possibly not many who were diagnosed so early on. The days of the AIDS epidemic seem long ago and I am reluctant to revisit those days with its loss of so many people who meant so much to me, not least because I can never fully reimagine what it was like at the time – as much to do with time’s passing as with self-preservation.

Since that time I’ve never encountered the sense of community and intensity of feeling prevalent in the HIV community then, but I have come close and for all the richness of experience and sorrow of the time I am grateful to be where I am now.

So many did everything they could to survive those times but the virus was impartial. That I got through it all remains a mystery.

Along the way I met many extraordinary people and explored many paths and am indebted to those who did so much for us with HIV at that perilous time.

I’ve no doubt this current pandemic will also bring out the best in others as well as in ourselves.

MORE INFO

- [www.edwardcarpentercommunity.org.uk](http://www.edwardcarpentercommunity.org.uk)
- [www.lunchpositive.org](http://www.lunchpositive.org)
- [www.tht.org.uk](http://www.tht.org.uk)
- [www.peeraction.net](http://www.peeraction.net)
- [www.sussexbeacon.org.uk](http://www.sussexbeacon.org.uk)
THE ‘SHRINKING BUNCH’

Living and ageing with HIV. Craig Hanlon-Smith speaks to local anti-stigma campaigner Alan Spink

Alan Spink works with a number of local HIV agencies across Brighton & Hove and further afield across the south east, supporting those living and often isolated with HIV. He trained as an HIV peer mentor with the Sussex Beacon and now works with it as an HIV caseworker funded by the Big Lottery Fund. He is 63 and has been living with HIV for 17 years. I asked him to map out what he considers to be the challenges facing those ageing with HIV, both in terms of those he works with and in his own circumstances. Alan is also the brains and creative behind the local anti-stigma campaign featuring Stigmasaur with the Martin Fisher Foundation.

Can you map out the challenges faced by those living and ageing with HIV?

“In general terms there’s a marked different between what are known as ‘long-term survivors’ and those diagnosed after the advent of commonly used anti-retrovirals in 1996, so I would say for those diagnosed post 1998/99 their lives are, in most cases, likely to be more straightforward. For the longer-term survivors, their bodies are crumbling. They suffer with osteoporosis, some with crumbling spines, have hips replaced sometimes twice and many are in constant pain.

“Then there are the mental health issues. Many have experienced rejection on multiple levels, often as a direct result of being HIV+, many rely on benefits and it’s an indescribable struggle to survive on the state. The boundaries for disability benefits shift every few years and our clients find that everything has to be reassessed again. It’s the simple things. An individual may qualify for a disability bus pass and then five years later have to re-prove they qualify again.

“A lot of these people are surviving on charity. In Brighton & Hove we’re fortunate because of all the different charities involved that we have, the most in such a concentrated area in the country, and it’s still difficult here. It isn’t like this all across Sussex. For example, Hastings, the HIV clinic is great, very supportive, but that is all they have. You don’t imagine that poverty of resource in somewhere as wealthy as Sussex.

“Many of those relying on such services live in poor quality social housing. HIV+ ageing people are low on the council’s priorities, access to GPs is difficult and with appointment ‘rules’ such as you can only talk about one thing at an appointment – these patients have multiple health complaints. In some parts of the country there isn’t a local HIV clinic in the way that we have them, all of their services are through the GP and GPs are stretched.

“The Lawson Unit [local HIV clinic as part of the Royal Sussex Country Hospital] is quite remarkable. If it’s concerned about a patient it will work with charities and other agencies to support the individual. It’s incredible.”

“The Lawson Unit is quite remarkable. If it’s concerned about a patient it will work with charities and other agencies to support the individual”

And your own challenges in ageing with HIV?

“I’m fortunate in that I was diagnosed in 2003. My viral load rocketed immediately and therefore I was on a drug trial within months and this has probably saved me from physical issues as I grow older.”

In 2017 THT reported that 60% of those ageing with HIV were either at or below the poverty line – why would that be?

“In London and Brighton it’s expensive to live anyway. If you’re accessing the benefits I’ve described then it’s next to impossible. Many long-term survivors have poor financial management skills – unpaid bills and the debts mount up. This comes from being diagnosed at a time when they didn’t expect to live. HIV was a death sentence.”

And of course in those days the stigma of that diagnosis was even greater than today.

“Yes and stigmatised people shy away, they don’t make demands or ask for help. They’re also very grateful for anything that people do for them, the slightest thing. There isn’t at all a culture of expectation.”

Can we turn this poverty trap around?

“Probably not. Ageing people living with HIV rely on charities but we’re also a shrinking bunch. These people are dying. The percentage of older people living with HIV is expanding but the actual number is smaller. As the cohort shrinks the services will disappear and no one will pump money into disappearing services, certainly not the government.

“Charities need better funding. The Brighton Rainbow Fund is a fabulous umbrella organisation and we’re very fortunate that it’s there, but look at what’s happening now. There is barely any fundraising during lockdown and the state does sweet f*** all.”

Days before Alan and I speak, Public Health England (PHE) was accused of sending out alarming text messages to thousands of healthy HIV+ people, incorrectly telling them they were on the most vulnerable list and to stay indoors for 12 weeks. I ask Alan what the consequences of such an error are for those he works with. He doesn’t hold back.

“Well first to say is that it hasn’t admitted the error. It’s possible IT have texted thousands using the NHS Flu-Jab list but not everyone on that list has had a message and not everyone living with HIV has a suppressed immune system, so we don’t know exactly who it has contacted and it’s a mess. All the way through the HIV chain, PHE and the government before it have been f***ing stupid. Idiots with a terrible record on HIV. It was very good with its doomsday advertisement in 1987/88 but very little after that. It gave some money to the Martin Fisher Foundation for the anti-stigma campaign, 70k through which we developed anti-stigma films, but it wouldn’t then take action to share the message.

“We see its failings now with Covid-19. It’s ineffective, weak. These social distancing rules are completely wrong. Is it really okay for us to go on our one daily walk past runners and cyclists spluttering out their breath on us?”

“The damage from this text message to our HIV+ clients is huge. Some got letters, some got texts, some got both and the challenge we have is to say ‘no you’re fine, ignore the letter from PHE’. Why would they believe us? In Brighton there are 2,500 people living with HIV, many of whom are now unnecessarily scared thanks to the incompetence of PHE, their anxiety is off the scale.”

MORE INFO

- www.sussexbeacon.org.uk
- www.themartinfisherfoundation.org
INNOVATIVE APPROACHES TO AGEING WITH HIV. CRAIG HANLON-SMITH SPEAKS TO CLIVE BLOWES FROM THT

IT’S A MIXED BAG

INNOVATIVE APPROACHES TO AGEING WITH HIV. CRAIG HANLON-SMITH SPEAKS TO CLIVE BLOWES FROM THT

“Long-term survivors remember what the early days of HIV/AIDS was like and we need recognition of the loss and trauma felt by many that some are now reliving.”

MORE INFO

www.tht.org.uk
BREXIT BROKE MY HEART

It’s as simple as that, says Maria Jastrzębska. But it isn’t just about Europe.

A Polish friend’s 10-year-old daughter visited recently. I’ll call her Żabka. We were doing one of my favourite things: looking at the big atlas together. To find England we looked in Europe. Żabka had heard something about Brexit and was wondering if England was still in Europe or not. And there it was on the map, still in Europe – it hadn’t drifted away…

I tried to explain: I showed her Poland, where both me and her mum were born, and how we’d been invaded (from East and West) in a very big war. So many people had died, which was very sad, that after that big war the different countries got together to figure out how to make sure there was never a war like that again … these countries made promises to each other – the EU – and made up rules for how to be kind and friendly, not only to each other but to animals, nature. Żabka knew about that as they talk about caring for the environment at school.

As a child I came to the UK with my family to escape Communism (another story). Some people were kind to us, others not. I was bullied at primary school and secondary school. I tell people this not because I want pity but to give them an idea of what it was like then. People hung signs in pubs saying: no blacks, no Irish, no dogs. At school, kids who were different were bullied. In my class it was a black girl, me, and a girl who happened to be Jewish. Some people were kind and friendly. Which is more than our current leaders are capable of grasping.

So there is hope. There is always hope. We have that ended. Which is why there were LGBTQ+ people on the seafront the evening Brexit was passed. We cried, hugged, sang together, lit candles despite the strong wind, as people in other countries did, to guide us ‘home’.

In case you’re still wondering what this has to do with queer people – surely it’s about trade agreements, bureaucracy? - once you are allowed to attack any one group you have a green light to attack other groups too.

Misogyny can flourish too, which in turn leads to hatred of LGBTQ+ people. Even if you focus on one thing, like Extinction Rebellion or Pride for instance, it’s all linked… We know how fascism begins – finding an ‘other’ to blame. A dangerous thing.

After the first Brexit vote, even by the police’s conservative estimates, levels of violence against ethnic minority groups shot up. The dubious stereotype of the hardworking Polish plumber was replaced by the harsher narrative about ‘those people’ taking ‘our’ jobs. Polish people have been called ‘vermin’ and told to go home, there’s been graffiti, cards put through letterboxes, attacks. My friends who were Polish and other Eastern Europeans felt like they were black people. They have actually been black people.

And it isn’t only Europeans who’ve been targeted of course. People of colour, Muslims, anyone speaking another language. That is the whole point really. It was never about Europe – or the EU with its inevitable imperfections. It was about fear: about Islamophobia, fear of refugees, about wanting to blame someone, something for problems in the UK. It’s no accident the government was also busy creating a ‘hostile environment’ and began deporting Caribbean immigrants of the Windrush generation - they still are. As a Pole, though I am fortunate to have the right papers – unlike people who arrived on Windrush – and my family were white immigrants, I stopped feeling welcome in this country.

As I write this, we’re facing Covid-19, a rapidly spreading virus. Friends are being forced to stay home. But the poorest and most vulnerable are being hit hardest, inequalities in our society are now in even sharper relief. All the more reason for the UK to be sharing solutions, helping and being helped by its neighbours. It’s what people are doing at the grassroots. Yesterday two women I’ve never met who live on the same street as me put a note through my door offering me support.

Language has got confusing because everyone’s talking about ‘self-isolating’ - a necessary physical precaution at the moment. (What’s a better word – coconuting, sheltering, self-care?)

As Brexit may seem like old news with what’s going on now – but actually it’s part of it. We still need to grieve and to rage. Because the effects of it will be with us for some time. I’m hanging onto the word ‘we’. Oldies like me lived through Thatcherism, Section 28. We’re still here. We’ll continue to be thorns in the side of this government. There are also young people (like who posted the sweet note through my door). And there’s my even younger friend, Żabka, who understood right away that if you break ‘promises’ you’ve made to other countries (and so ditch guidelines about health, welfare, equality and the environment) that’s not being kind or friendly. Which is more than our current leaders are capable of grasping.

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So there is hope. There is always hope. We have each other, we have imagination, a vision of how things should be, could be, one day will be. We won’t shut up. We can fight to keep those borders open starting with our own hearts and minds.

MORE INFO

Poet, editor and translator, Maria Jastrzębska was born in Warsaw, Poland and came to England as a child. She co-edited Queer In Brighton (New Writing South, 2014); her latest full length poetry collection is The True Story Of Cowboy Hat And Ingénue (Cinnamon Press/Liquorice Fish, 2018); and most recently she was the lead artist in Snow Q, an ACE awarded collaborative multimedia project.

www.mariajastrzebska.wordpress.com
www.snowqproject.wordpress.com

“In case you’re still wondering what this has to do with queer people – surely it’s about trade agreements, bureaucracy? – once you are allowed to attack any one group you have a green light to attack other groups too”
**CHOIRS IN LOCKDOWN**

One of the most productive and rewarding social activities on the Brighton scene must be the weekly gatherings of our choirs so it must be hard going in this time of lockdown. Brian Butler talked to the four leading music directors of the five big chorus groups and asked how they were filling their time.

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**Basic Bitches Learn Their Pitches** shows how to read music, pitch, rhythms and intervals. **Kate Bush Advanced Music Theory** looks at roles, time signatures and keys. And **Vocal Technique for Divas** teaches what every little Madonna needs to know, including the Italian Bel Canto technique. Joe’s also helping budding composers and soloists and finally his **Abandoned Gay Cabaret** has members performing from isolation.

For more info: [www.brightongmc.org](http://www.brightongmc.org)

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**STEFAN HOLMSTROM**

**Resound** and **Rebelles** choirs, told me: “We were gutted to have to postpone our Fringe show, Baring it All, but we encourage all who bought tickets to donate the £14 to Fairshare Sussex, a charity that redistributes surplus food and is working hard to get meals to vulnerable people during the pandemic.

“We will start doing regular Zoom sessions soon for choir members.”

Stefan is keeping busy coaching and teaching singers online and is soon doing **Estill Voice Training** workshops, which will be open to all. Estill is a scientific way of learning how the voice works. “We can train individual parts of the voice, like the tongue, vocal folds, jaw and lips. It works on all forms from opera to pop and for those recovering after vocal damage,” he told me.

For more info: [www.stefanholmstrom.co.uk](http://www.stefanholmstrom.co.uk)

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**ANEESA CHAUDHRY**

**Rainbow Chorus** is also using Zoom for virtual rehearsals and thank you videos to the LGBTQ+ community. She’s also connected to a group making hospital scrubs as part of the **Singing For Scrubs** campaign.

She’s leading masterclasses in singing techniques, choral theory and songwriting, plus choir karaoke sessions and quizzes.

Aneesa gives one-to-one singing lessons, vocal confidence and public speaking sessions. On May 27, she will run a **Lockdown Karaoke**.

For more info: [www.aneesachaudhry.com](http://www.aneesachaudhry.com)

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**SAM COUSINS**

**Actually Gay Men’s Chorus**, is focusing with his members on mental health and keeping in touch. The choir is meeting virtually at its usual rehearsal time via Zoom and he’s teaching some of the music for future post-lockdown concerts, as well as teaching singing technique and basic music theory.

And to keep it light, each rehearsal ends with the wearing of silly hats and crazy costumes. “We’re hosting watch parties and looking at old recordings of our shows from the past 15 years,” he told me. He also plans to make opportunities for members to sing from their front rooms with a lockdown virtual audience to support them.

Their eagerly awaited 15th anniversary show has now been postponed till 2021, but in the meantime in their spare time they are reaching out to help their designated charities – **Sussex Beacon** and **Lunch Positive**.

For more info: [www.actuallygmc.org](http://www.actuallygmc.org)

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**JOE PAXTON**

**Joe Paxton** of the **Brighton Gay Men’s Chorus** filled me in on its activities. “We’re using Zoom for rehearsals, including the non-Christmas elements of our December show. I’m offering choir skills programmes as well as basic and advanced music theory.”

For more info: [www.actuallygmc.org](http://www.actuallygmc.org)

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So all in all our choirs are busy – frustrated but busy – and maybe here’s an idea: when all this is over there could be a mass gathering of the singers at a large venue to give thanks and raise money – just a thought.
SCENE FROM THE SOFA
Missing your favourites tearing it up on the stages and behind the DJ booths of our LGBTQ+ venues? Graham Robson caught up with the scene’s hottest toffs to find out how they’ve been spending their time during lockdown, what's been keeping their clocks ticking, and what naughtiness they have planned for when COVID is COV-er...

“I’m gonna be like a needy Labrador after all of this. Jumping up for a kind word and a rub of my tummy”

LOLA LASAGNE
With over 30 long years of treading the boards, Lola Lasagne is a showgirl with more layers than the Italian dish. What has the Brighton Belle been up to during lockdown? Lola shares her plans for the future and top tips to get us through...

Hey Lola, what have you been up to?
“Like most people I’ve been in a state of shock. No one saw this coming and it’s quite literally stopped the world. The longer it goes on the more the world will change too. Still if it gives the USA and UK leaders spines then we might come out of this relatively unscathed. I’ve been a bit sick as well. No definite corona symptoms but a viral flu bug. All better now thankfully.”

Have you been doing anything online?
“Well I was initially reluctant but have succumbed. A lack of technology prevents me from doing a cabaret show. During this lockdown, I’m sure some acts are realising how important DJs are...

“And so I’m doing an online version of the quiz I host at the Duke of Wellington in Soho - Didn’t They Do Welly - every Wednesday at 6.30pm on my Facebook page. You just need a pen, paper and a drink. Okay, two. Four rounds of 10 questions plus shout outs, dedications and questions for me to answer.”

We’ve seen loads of other queens keeping busy on Facebook Live... Any faves?
“The shows I’ve really enjoyed are by the performers who’ve just done a show. And by that I mean they’ve used their time with a beginning, middle and end. If the audience is using the time to scrutinise a performer’s home then something is wrong. And where the f**k is everybody getting the slashed gold backdrops from?

“So my favourites at present are Myra DuBois with her A Problem Shared show on Wednesdays, Mary Mac with her Lanzarote Lockdown - that voice is insane. I have to mention Lydia L'Scabies with her fabulous Britney pastiche and Herr the Queen with her fabulous Carol Vorderman pastiche. Both are so inventive and entertaining. Away from the scene I’ve enjoyed the National Theatre play showings, plus the Andrew Lloyd Webber musicals.”

Any tips to keep us sane during lockdown?
“Thank goodness for the internet. The shows I’ve mentioned and all the others, plus YouTube, Netflix etc have been saviours. Can you imagine if this had happened 20 years ago? I suffer with anxiety, so music has been so important to me. Loving my radio and making up playlists. I’ve reduced the time listening to the news, opinions so I don’t overthink at all which is so easy to do but not beneficial for people’s mental health.

“And use your government approved hours walk/exercise each day. You may not be allowed to be within two metres of others but seeing human faces, kids, animals will do you the world of good and give you a brief taste of normal times. Just don’t abuse your time out. Stay away from others. Wash your hands. Stay well.”

What are your plans for when it’s all over?
“Who can say? We obviously want to get back to normal ASAP but I really don’t think that’s going to happen for some time. I had a full diary this year but if the virus disappeared on May 31 I doubt we’ll be walking back into gigs the following weekend. There’s going to be a huge period of adjustment for the world after this. We’ll be fitting in where we can, I guess.

“I do pray that we heed the guidelines set and the world’s scientists are able to work as fast as possible to find an end to this and halt the loss of life. It’s heart-breaking that people are dying alone and they and their families have no time with each other.”

What do you miss most?
“People. Being able to hug my friends. My friend Craig did a shop for me when I was sick and he gives the best hugs. Not being able to do that destroys me. I’m gonna be like a needy Labrador after all of this. Jumping up for a kind word and a rub of my tummy.”

FOLLOW
Miss-Lola-Lasagne
@MissLolaLasagne
different to face to face entertainment. I don’t get to see my pals’ work often as we are normally working all over the place so it has been a bit of a treat for me!”

How else have you been beating the boredom while in lockdown? “Doing all the things you put off like tidying the wardrobe, which I’ve been putting off forever! I did the kitchen cupboards yesterday... F**k, I hope I am not turning into Kim Woodburn!”

What do you miss the most and what are your plans for when this is over? “When this is done, I am going to have a big party. The only thing that is getting to me is not knowing when I am going to see my friends again. I’m finding that difficult. I also think once this is done I won’t ever take my life or freedom for granted again. It’s taken this to make me realise how wonderful life is!”

We’re really sorry to see Brighton & Hove Pride postponed... “It’s a great blow to our community and the city of Brighton & Hove. Pride is the largest contributor to the Brighton Rainbow Fund, which supports many of our local charities that are a lifeline to so many. It’s very sad that the 30th anniversary of Brighton & Hove Pride has had to be postponed. Pride takes a massive amount of organisation and my thoughts are with Paul Kemp and his team who I know will be devastated by this decision. But once this has passed my god what a party we will have! In the meantime, stay safe #WeStandTogether.”

“God knows what size I’ll be by the end of all of this - I’ll probably have to spit on my hips to get through my front door!”

**MISS JASON**

A Miss not to be missed, award-winning drag act Miss Jason has been entertaining the crowds for more years than she cares to remember with comedy patter and joie de vivre. Catch one of the campest queens on the scene live from her living room on Facebook Live every Sunday at 7pm with 20% of money donated going to the Brighton Rainbow Fund.

What have you been up to? “In truth, not very much; it’s taken me a while to get my head around all of this. As you know I’m a social animal and like so many people it’s taken a lot to adjust. I’ve never eaten so much in my life, god knows what size I will be by the end of all of this - I’ll probably have to spit on my hips to get through my front door!”

Where can we see you while we’re all locked indoors? “I’m doing a live show from home on Facebook Live every Sunday at 7pm, so I’m really looking forward to that. I am encouraging people to get involved as much as they can by sending in questions... That could be dangerous!”

Have you seen many other Facebook Live performances? “Yes, lots of my pals have been doing online shows. It’s been really good to watch. Also it’s interesting to see them use a different type of skill as online is very

**DAVE LYNCH**

One of Britain’s most enduring drag queens, Dave Lynn is fit, 60-something and still fabulous. With over 40 years treading the boards, Dave has become, dare we say, the Godmother of drag in the UK. How has he been spending his time while in lockdown?

Hey Dave, how is it going? “Hi, I’m doing okay, it’s a strange feeling... I have been a Drag Queen since I was 18, I’m now 61 and I always said I’d take a month off one day. Now I have no choice.”

Have you done or seen much onlinestuff? “No, I haven’t done anything online but I plan to. I’ve seen some of my friends doing their shows online and it’s made me feel proud and good.”
**Pat Clutcher**

Pat Clutcher, Brighton’s misleading lady, is known for chandelier ear rings and bringing a heady mix of showtunes, pop, banter and mischief to venues in Brighton and beyond.

*How have you been spending time?*

“I started self isolating a little bit earlier than everyone else (as soon as the adult pantomime was cancelled) as I live with a nurse who works on the ICU at the Royal Sussex, caring for the virus sufferers, so I thought I’d isolate early, rather than be a potential spreader. Thank God for Disney Plus! I’ve been watching the entire Marvel back catalogue in chronological order, which has taken up a lot of time thankfully.”

*What have you been up to online?*

“I tested the water with an online show at short notice at the end of March; I enjoyed it! It was basically Pat Clutcher, getting drunk on Newcastle Brown Ale, singing requests while in a nuclear bunker... it was camp! The response was epic. The video’s had 3,000 views. It just goes to show that we all need a bit of light relief in these extraordinary times.”

*How did it compare to being on stage?*

“It’s totally unlike any live performance that I’ve been a part of. If anything, it’s probably nearer to being on OnlyFans or Cam4! Haha. It’s strange, but great that technology gives us the ability to do this, so we can continue doing the things that we love, for the people we love. It’s so strange, though, not having a live audience to react, especially as there’s about 15 seconds delay on Facebook Live!”

Have you spotted any other good shows on the web?

“I think every drag queen in the city has dipped their toe into the ‘online show’ pool, it’s really great to watch. I want to give a shout out to the fabulous Golden Cross in Cardiff, who are putting on entertainment online for the whole week with the legendary Mary Golds and Joanne Bumme. They deserve medals for doing their bit to keep spirits up; like Dame Vera Lynn but with a meaty tuck!”

*Any tips to keep our spirits up?*

“Keep talking, whether that’s online or on the phone. We’re all in this together. We are all experiencing loneliness and isolation, and it’s very tough on our mental health. But technology can unite us; use it!”

*Any plans for when this is over?*

“To get back as soon as I can to do what I love, entertaining the assembled masses! I really am looking forward to the whole country having the biggest party ever when this is all finished! And I hope that day comes sooner rather than later!”

*We’re going to really miss Brighton Pride this year...*

“When the news broke, I don’t think I was shocked. In the current climate it was sadly inevitable, and not an easy decision for the Pride team to make. I’ll miss the community feel of preparing for Pride; everyone from the venues, staff, regulars, non-regulars and cabaret performers, there’s a sense of pulling together and putting on one great showcase for our city and our community. As a former venue operator myself elsewhere in the country, I understand how Pride generates a lot of revenue for some bars, which enables them to keep us entertained the rest of the year. Once this nightmare is over, our community needs to put on the biggest of celebrations in these bars, and make sure these safe spaces continue.

“It’s safe to say that Pride 2021 is going to be one hell of a party, and I hope in 18 months I’m reading in GScene that it broke fundraising records for the Brighton Rainbow Fund!”

*Any words of wisdom to get us through?*

“Words of wisdom? Well, I’m a bit crap at this sort of thing, but I saw a post online yesterday that said “after every storm there’s got to be a rainbow”. I guess that’s it, and that’s what I know we are all holding out for. One day...”

**Follow**

@PatClutcherDQ

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**Candi Rell**

Candi Rell DQ gives audiences all she can - and more! Candi has been cleaning out her drawers and planning for the future...

*What have you been up to?*

“I’ve been learning new songs. I’ve done one online show and was very touched by people’s responses. I also did a tip me thing and all monies raised will be split between Lunch Positive and Alzheimer’s Society. I had a beautiful message from a friend who works with adults with additional needs; I was so touched to hear that they’d been singing along.”

*How do ‘virtual’ performances compare with ‘live’?*

“It’s very weird not performing face to face... I found it bizarre that no one’s there to interact with. It was a 5pm show and I knew friends with children were watching so I kept it PG. It was tricky to read the comments as I’d left my glasses upstairs!”

*Have you seen any stand-out performances online?*

“It’s been amazing to see so many performers going live and doing a great job!”

*Any tips to cheer us up?*

“I’m fortunate to have a day job so that keeps me busy but when not at work I’ve been doing the boring stuff: washing costumes, sorting make up, and keeping the house clean. I find learning new songs a great release.”

*What are your plans for when it’s over?*

“Having great big parties in my local pubs.”

*We’re going to really miss Pride this year...*

“The cancellation of Pride has hit so many in so many different ways. For the last four years I’ve been honoured to organise the Marine Tavern Pride Village Party Cabaret stage with Steven Banks aka Stephanie Von Clitz. Year on year we’ve developed the stage bringing a mix of known and new acts. We had started planning this year’s and it was set to be an amazing celebration of Brighton. I know the decision to cancel is the right one but I know how many people were looking forward to it. It’s a great blow to all acts and venues in Brighton and beyond, however I know 2021 will be the biggest and best Brighton & Hove Pride. I hope those that can do donate their entrance money to help the charities that’ll be badly affected this time.”

*What do you miss the most?*

“The company of others and being able to see and perform cabaret along with being able to get what I need in the shops.”

*Any words of wisdom?*

“It’s okay not to be okay. If you’re having a bad day turn to family, friends or entertainers. I often find people talk to performers about things after a show and most of us are good listeners.”

**Follow**

@CandiRell-DQ
Hey Spice, how’s tricks?

“I’ve done quite a few live performances. Living in Lanzarote, we went into lockdown about a week before the UK and when we did it was quick and strict. Within a couple of days I decided to get online and try to bring people together, so I came up with my viral pub quiz Fact Hunt. It’s now a regular Friday evening event and between the planning and execution it fills a couple of days quite nicely! I also presented Spice Takes the Bins Out. I figured if people were bored enough they’d want to watch it. And so far about a thousand people have - that’s bonkers!”

How’s it gone down?

“The response has been really wonderful. I only really expected a few friends to join in, but people view it live from all over the world, and my first quiz has been viewed over 1,000 times. It just shows how bored people are! Seriously though, I like the quiz because it’s interactive. The feed scrolls past and people chat to each other, sharing clues and saying hi. We’ve even had people who are geography apart teaming up using WhatsApp video calling… that’s what I wanted. It’s not about people just passively watching me on a screen, we have telly for that, but about feeling part of something social. The response has been positive and quite overwhelming.”

How does it compare to performing to a sea of faces?

“The main difference is that there’s no live audience, but I’ve never really liked being among the general public, so that’s a bonus (jokes!). Losing that instant reaction is a bit jarring at first. Finishing a song to no applause feels weird, although I’m sure a lot of queens in Brighton are used to it (jokes again!). The real bonus is having the time for genuine interaction with those watching. And to be able to scroll back after the event and reply to comments. That’s been really nice.”

Have you had the chance to indulge in other online performances?

“So many! It seems to have taken off now, which is just marvellous. Loads of cabaret entertainers, both in the UK and in Lanzarote, have ‘gone live’ so I won’t even try to list them all. What’s been surprising is the response from those who don’t usually perform. Marc Edwards (aka Ruffles) has been doing make-up tutorials, Kevin Coyle (Mr Bearvert) teaches us how to cook, and a brand new queen Cherry Bomb hosts Blankety Blank! Billie Gold has been teaching us (and herself) to make banana bread while cracking out the 1980s tunes. Absolute genius! My personal highlight has been Adam Brooks (Bedford Tavern) taking their infamous Sunday Piano Bingo online. He has somehow managed to recreate the madcap mayhem of the Bedford via Facebook live and it’s been really popular. If you only watch one streaming event this should be it! Contact Adam/Bedford Tavern in advance for your (free) bingo ticket!”

Any tips to keep us occupied?

“Use technology to your advantage. Video call rather than text and play online games with friends and family. And if you’re in a position to do so, check on those nearby to see if they need any help. If you can contribute in any way to someone else’s wellbeing then you’ll lift your own spirits as well as helping others. You can always use the time to learn a new skill. There are plenty of online resources for that and a lot are free. I’ve been learning to juggle. I’m still on balls (ahem!) but am hoping that once this is over I’ll have worked my way up to juggling knives, so watch this space. And probably don’t sit in the front row at my next show.”

What are your plans for when it’s all over?

“The first thing I’ll do is head to the beach. I feel the need for wide open space. After that, probably to the pub with everyone else. I’m sure there will be parties all over and I won’t be missing out on that!”

We’re really going to miss Pride this year…

“It’s very sad but obviously necessary. We’ll miss the party, but there will be other parties. The real shame is that the funds usually raised through Pride and awarded to so many valuable organisations won’t be there either. They’ll be hit hard and at the time when we need them the most. Perhaps we could go back to the old days of Winter Pride? For those old enough to remember, this was a week of fundraising events for various charities across all LGBTQ+ venues. Something for us all to think about once this is over. I would certainly support it!”

Any words of wisdom to get us through?

“Turn the news off. In this age of 24 hour rolling news it can become oppressive and overwhelming. Keep up to date once each day, rolling news it can become oppressive and overwhelming. Keep up to date once each day, but in the meantime put it to the back of your mind. Do something fun and ridiculous - laugh, dance and sing. It’s impossible to be miserable if you’re dancing around the kitchen in your pants!”

“Stay safe, stay spicy, and stay the f*** at home!”

FOLLOW

SpiceDrag
Hey Alfie, what have you been up to?

“I’ve been on Facebook Live every Saturday at around 3pm (I’ve still managed to be late even though the show is only in my own house).”

How’s it been going down?

“I’ve been trying to bring the fun and madness of the Bottomless Brunch I host at the North Laine Brewhouse every week to people’s homes. We drink prosecco, dance to the Macarena, play games and sing songs. It’s been really lovely to connect with old friends and new ones too. The response has been amazing with people joining in. I ask everyone watching to send me pictures of what they’re doing which is lovely to see afterwards. We had two lovely men from America drinking prosecco and doing the Macarena in week two, which was fun to see.”

How does it compare with your stage work?

“It’s very strange performing to a little phone. It’s kind of good to be able to see what you’re doing. I duct tape mine to the wall so the audience can see almost full length which means I can move around and dance if I want. I think the thing I miss the most is having a microphone. I’ve seen queens using all sorts as a pretend microphone.”

What is your exercise routine?

“The YMCA gets me nice and warm. If I’m feeling energised I might tackle the Cha Cha Slide.”

Any tips to keep us from climbing the walls?

“Leftover nail varnish is great for a bit of upcycling. Or if you’re the artsy type, you can download my colouring book for free from my website www.alfieordinary.com/shop”

What are your plans for when it’s all over?

“Well I had some really fun shows planned over the summer. My show, the EastEnders Cabaret, which was at the Queens Arms as part of Brighton Fringe had sold out and we were about to announce its London debut so we’ll have to see what happens with that. I also had a Drag Roast planned for my birthday in May with Cilly Black, Cherry Liquor, Joe Black and Lydia L’Scabies coming to roast me. Hopefully we can find a time to reschedule those shows. It really does depend on what happens and when things can start to go back to normal. I can’t wait to get back to Bottomless Brunch and I really hope we’ll be ready for Christmas as it’s my favourite time to do shows.”

What do you miss the most?

“I miss a pint of lager watching the queens in my favourite Brighton venues.”

Any words of wisdom to keep us going?

“It sounds silly, but watching live streams have been such a lovely way of keeping in contact with people. Seeing all the usual faces popping up in the comments makes you feel like you’re sitting in the Queens Arms or the Regency Tavern watching a show and chatting with friends at the bar. Get yourself a drink and enjoy the shows. It really does feel like you’re part of a community still, because even though we can’t see each other, we are still a community, and we’re here for each other.

“Buy a basil plant or mint in your next shop. I’ve had mine for weeks and it’s really lovely to see something growing and flourishing in a time when things seem a bit glum. Routine, responsibility and good food are really important when you’re stuck indoors and I can’t recommend it enough.”

FOLLOW  Alfie Ordinary  www.alfieordinary.com

ALFIE ORDINARY

Alfie Ordinary has been taking the UK drag and cabaret scene by storm with his unique take on drag as the UK’s only Drag Prince. Here, he shares his top tips to keep well during lockdown, performing from his living room and plans for the future...
MISS DISNEY

- Camp, kitsch and full of nostalgia, award-winning international drag princess and vocalist, the superfalifragilisticexpialidocious Miss Disney drags her audiences through a queer journey of discovery!

Hey, been up to much?
“T’took the first couple of weeks to rest! It’s not every day we get a bit of time to connect to ourselves, allow laziness and binge watch tonnes of Netflix! I gave myself a bit of vocal rest too! Now I’m doing online performances with my friend Ruffles The Clown who hosts a Disney Quiz on Facebook and Instagram on Tuesdays from 7.30pm with a half time show from me around 8.30pm.”

Sounds like a hoot!
“I hope we will have all those Disney fans squealing from the rooftops! I’ve yet to get into full drag and then not go anywhere, but I can already imagine it’s going to be the weirdest sensation!”

Must be odd performing to camera and not a sea of faces...
“Audience interaction is probably one of the biggest factors. As entertainers we can perform in any situation, but the fact we don’t hear the audience makes things interesting, especially as a lot of us really enjoy that part the most! Not only that, the energy in the room and the networking you do post show isn’t present.”

Have you seen much else online?
“Yes - the Brighton community are all doing their own shows and spin offs of their residential performances/shows and I think it’s really wonderful. And the fact everyone is tuning into each other’s work is just gorgeous. We aren’t letting this get us down!”

Any tips to keep us from climbing the walls?
“Definitely do stuff that you love! If you’re an extroverted outdoor person like me it’s hard. Best to take the energy out on catching up with friends and family. I spend at least three hours every day speaking to friends. It’s so important to stay connected especially for social butterflies! Try out new creative things, buy yourself a puzzle or a paint by numbers! Routine is very important when you feel like queueing so I just buy whatever is left over in local shops… any recipes out there for kippers, green olives and spam?”

What are your plans for when this is all over?
“It doesn’t feel as if it’s going to go away anytime soon… we’re in for a long haul. But I’ve just been approached by a video games developer for kippers, green olives and spam?”

Any top tips to keep our readers occupied during lockdown?
“Organise a vague schedule for the day so it’s got some structure. Even in a small flat you can reorganise a corner and make it into a café (we do that), and have a coffee with a chocolate or something to make the day special in some way. Big tip for Brighton people is that the posh Parisian croissant shop is still open. Yes. The one near the station – Julien Plumart is a weekly continental treat. As for food, well I don’t like queueing so I just buy whatever is left over in local shops… any recipes out there for kippers, green olives and spam?”

What are your plans for when this is all over?
“It doesn’t feel as if it’s going to go away anytime soon… we’re in for a long haul. But I’ve just been approached by a video games developer so I’ll be writing catchy tunes every day from now on.”

What do you miss the most?
“Swimming. I swim in the local cess pit twice a week and even miss the unsanitised state of the pool. Oh – the memories of athletes foot. Wonderful. And the fact everyone is tuning into each other’s work is all out there… even the National Theatre has started doing it!”

Any words of wisdom to keep us going?
“Meditation is so important in this uncertain time, try to find something that makes you laugh every day. It’s vital to laugh to keep the endorphins flowing and of course GO GET DISNEY+!”

FOLLOW
 Maria Gardner (Miss Disney)

LORRAINE BOWEN

- Off-the-wall Britain’s Got Talent star Lorraine Bowen loves fashion, great melodies, A-line dresses, polyester and Casiotone organs. During lockdown she’s doing a new online-only show, Elevenses With Lorraine!

Hey Lorraine, what have you been up to?
“Thought you’d never ask! When the initial lockdown came about I thought it might be a good idea to keep something going everyday, so I dreamt up Elevenses With Lorraine going out live everyday at 11am. Just four minutes… some exercises, sing-alongs, fun, uptempo stuff… to keep everyone on their toes (and me)!”

How’s it gone down?
“OMG – such a wonderful response from people all over the world. I do the show on YouTube, Facebook and Instagram so I’ve got it covered! Just lovely comments and shares from kids to cheery adults. Some people say it makes a difference to their wellbeing so that’s great and makes it all worthwhile.”

How does it compare with performing in front of an audience?
“Well Elevenses is live and unedited… so it’s like doing it in front of a crowd. It’s raw and all done in one take – the first take. I hardly even practise the tune – it’s about the initial energy and getting it out there. It’s not about me it’s about getting people smiling, laughing and making them get up and have a bit of fun. The more raw the better… people like the mistakes!”

Have you seen much else online?
“Loads of people are sharing skills, putting on concerts, gigs, cabaret. It’s all out there… even the National Theatre has started doing it!”

Any top tips to keep our readers occupied during lockdown?
“Organise a vague schedule for the day so it’s got some structure. Even in a small flat you can reorganise a corner and make it into a café (we do that), and have a coffee with a chocolate or something to make the day special in some way. Big tip for Brighton people is that the posh Parisian croissant shop is still open. Yes. The one near the station – Julien Plumart is a weekly continental treat. As for food, well I don’t like queueing so I just buy whatever is left over in local shops… any recipes out there for kippers, green olives and spam?”

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What do you miss the most?
“Swimming. I swim in the local cess pit twice a week and even miss the unsanitised state of the pool. Oh – the memories of athletes foot. Take me back.”

Any words of wisdom for us?
“Yes, tune into Elevenses With Lorraine every week day at 11am and I’ll try to cheer you up for four minutes.”

FOLLOW
 Lorraine Bowen Experience
Hey Bohemme, tell us a bit about yourself… and Madrid!

“Bohemme has the biggest heart and is really just a pussy cat. I don’t think Madrid is typically recognised as much as it should be for its drag scene that houses so many eclectic talents ranging from beauty queens to contortionists. When lockdown has finished, I’ll be waiting for you all with a sangria. In the meantime, follow me on social media.”

What have you been up to online?

“I’ve not done any online performances yet as sooooooo many of my drag sisters are doing them and I have been enjoying watching them in action as I don’t always get to see them live. Apart from that I’ve been cooking and cleaning and looking after my new puppy. We’ve been on lockdown for a month in Spain with more restrictions than in the UK.”

Seen any good stuff on the inter web?

“Oh so many good performances. I’ve been loving Mary Mac’s lockdown that she’s doing in Lanzarote on a Sunday. Kika Lorace and Supremme De Luxe have done amazing live videos too. Also on a Sunday there’s a drag festival online where around 15 drags do an online festival from around 6pm-1am on their Instagrams - so we don’t get bored.”

Any tips to keep us from going bonkers during lockdown?

“Start to do the little things that we always put off. Clean your flat, cook your favourite meal, read a book, look after yourself. FaceTime friends all over the world. It’s the little things that will help and we’ll all start to see things in a different way. But social distance always.”

What are your plans for when this is all over?

“The first thing I’ll do is see my mum (she’s in self isolation due to immunosuppressive) then I’m going to squeeze every last one of all of us prattling away online, wash your hands and for the love of God don’t be tempted to hook up.”

Hey Billie, what have you been up to?

“Quite a bit. My first live was impromptu from my kitchen, I had a little bit of a singing/bake along which is harder than it looks. I’ve done quite a few lives, some my own shows and some collaborations. The wonderful Cherry Bomb has me and several fabulous guests for her Blankety Blank, and the lovely Spice had me as his interval entertainment for his Fact Hunt. I’m hoping to do more however it takes more planning than you think.”

What has been the response to live stream shows been like?

“Surprisingly great. Singing from my bedroom is strange but lots of people tune in and dance along in their pants in their own houses.”

How does it compare with your stage stuff?

“Live performances are the performer’s life blood, it’s definitely very different, you can’t hear everyone clapping so have to rely on emojis and typed banter. Our fab gay bars have such an atmosphere, it’s easy to miss it. Would it be wrong to say I miss touching everyone?”

The queens have been busy online… have you caught many acts?

“Tons. Spice does a viral Fact Hunt every Friday at 7.30pm – that’s where I first saw a performer doing a lockdown live from home. I’ve seen great performances from Stephanie Von Clitz, Snow White Trash, Jason Thorpe, Poppycock, and Kara Van Park to name a few.”

Any tips to keep us busy while in lockdown?

“FaceTime is your best friend to quell loneliness. Lots of us thrive in the community by staying connected, we just have to find a different way to do it now. Other than that, picking up a new or forgotten talent is a fab way to go. Help the vulnerable if you can, but if you’re managing to stay sane and healthy well that’s just fine too.”

What are your plans for when this is all over?

“The first thing I’ll do is see my mum (she’s in self isolation due to being immunosuppressive) then I’m going to squeeze every last one of you, and do as many fundraisers as possible until you’re all sick of me.”

What do you miss the most?

“My community and singing for sure. Gigging and seeing smiling faces takes more planning than you think.”

Are you going to miss Brighton & Hove Pride?

“Enormously, I know this is a landmark event in our calendars every year, but it’s for a good reason that it’s being postponed. I know that we’re going to be back better than ever in 2021.”

Any words of wisdom to keep us going?

“Look after each other, be kind to yourself, remember to laugh, watch all of us prattling away online, wash your hands and for the love of God don’t be tempted to hook up.”

FOLLOW

Billie Gold, billie_gold
“For those still hard at work in essential services I salute you and thank you, we’ll hopefully all be entertaining you a little bit throughout this time and thanking you all after”

CHERRY BOMB

Jessica Rabbit and Vivian Ward’s lovechild, Cherry Bomb is an occasional entertainer and eternal slag. Here she spills how she’s been spending her time during lockdown and what’s caught her beady eye on the interweb…

Hey Cherry, tell us a bit about yourself…

“Hello Daddy, hello Mom. It’s your chchchchchh Cherry Bomb. I popped my proverbial cherry at Pride last summer to be the poster girl for our Supergay brand (WeAreSupergay.com), which is all about standing out and proud and feeling like a gay superhero. Growing up in Northern Ireland it wasn’t the easiest to be out and proud, it’s good to see it’s getting there today with some great performers and venues on the scene.”

What have you been up to?

“I’ve spent a lot of the isolation period learning to drink responsibly but failing miserably. Most recently I’ve given my bush a much needed trim so we could spend a bit of time in my back garden - 100% true, I have the builder’s tan to prove it.

“I’d been thinking about the idea of doing a play on classic TV game shows for a while and the first show had to be Blankety Blank. I grew up with the Lily Savage era, I still howl at the re-runs and outtakes on YouTube. It’s that rapport between Lily, the contestants and the ‘star turns’ that give you a sort of camp fun you wouldn’t usually see on TV at that time.

“I’m giving The Price Is Right a spin now and it’s been so much fun inviting people in the comments to GO LIVE and play along to win prizes. You can catch the show every Saturday at 8pm on Facebook Live if you follow @CallMeCherryBomb”

How’s it been going down?

“It’s been so much fun, especially having some amazing star turns, from the gorgeous Spice – who has been so supportive and genuinely lovely – to the stunning Billie Gold, my absolute space lesbian crush.

“I’m new to this and I’m not coming into it with any social media following so having almost 1,000 views of my first live act feels amazing. I think it’s allowed me to have a bit more fun with it without any huge pressure.”

What’s it like connecting with an audience through a screen?

“The real struggle for me has been gauging the audience reaction; I’m someone who feeds off that response whatever I throw myself into so it has definitely been a test of confidence to know that what you’re putting out there is hitting the mark and entertaining. I’m desperate to get out there in front of a real live crowd though, so watch this space.”

There’s so much going on online…

“There’s so much. What’s been so lovely to see is people like the lovely Adam Brooks keeping the Bedford Tavern family together. This whole thing has hit the pubs and venues so hard during what is normally such a busy time over Easter and coming up to summer. He has managed to keep Piano Bingo going on a Sunday in his own beautifully chaotic way and… It. Is. FABulous.”

“Spice also very quickly created an amazing weekly event with her Fact Hunt live on a Friday evening which is just getting better every week. The gorgeous Billie Gold and Snow White Trash have been hosting great live performances to keep us all connected and entertained. And Kevin Coyle has been bringing us live cooking shows every Thursday with his Food You Believe It page. Can’t wait for the lovely Bedford Tavern’s Josephine Valentine’s virtual Gilty Walking Tour on Wednesday. How could we be bored with all of that going on?.”

Any tips to keep us and our readers sane?

“As much as TV and phones are a great distraction, it’s important to keep your minds active without being glued to our screens. Read about something you’re interested in, challenge yourself with a new skill, hobby or language. Or make me some outfits if you fancy it - for style inspiration think Jessica Rabbit and Debbie Harry’s love child.

“Honestly the preparation for my Saturday night live shows has been a great distraction from what is going on and has really kept me busy.”

Any plans for when this is over?

“We’ll be throwing a huge party (as soon as it’s safe to do so obviously) to celebrate all of us for getting through this. I’ll also be getting some gigs booked in to come and see all your lovely faces in real life.”

What do you miss the most?

“Touching people, other than my husband…”

We’re going to miss Brighton Pride this year.

“It’s a shame that it’s had to be cancelled especially on the 30th anniversary, but I know it’ll be back bigger and better – if there’s anything we know how to do it’s being able to come through hard times and throw a hell of a party.”

Any words of wisdom to get us through?

“I know it is hard and everyone will have their own individual struggles but it is important for all of us to take care of our mental health during this time. Try to limit your intake of news and take time away from the constant stream of updates.

“A lot of us in the community have built families in our friends so it can be especially difficult to remove that part of our lives. Pick up the phone, have a video call, do whatever you can to keep those connections going. And go easy on yourself, it doesn’t matter if you didn’t join that live exercise tutorial or you didn’t achieve what you wanted to today - you’ve got tomorrow to try again. This is a time when the pressure of deadlines and workload has been lifted for a lot of us so try to take advantage of that. And for those still hard at work in essential services I salute you and thank you, we’ll hopefully all be entertaining you a little bit throughout this time and thanking you all after.

“I can only say what I’ve tried to do and that is to see this as a time to slow down and think about what really matters to me and how I want to steer my life. We can use this almost as a reset in a way, whether that’s finding new ways to earn a living or new ways to appreciate and explore the talents we have.”

FOLLOW - CallMeCherryBomb
DJ CLAIRE FULLER

Known for spinning feel-good tracks at Brighton’s best LGBTQ+ hotspots, DJ Claire Fuller knows how to read a crowd and get that hands in the air party vibe going. Here’s what she’s has been up to and her top tunes to cheer you up...

Hi Claire, how is it going?
“Hi, I’m doing okay. I’ve been doing DIY around the house. I went live on the first Saturday of lockdown playing cheesy party tunes so people could entertain their kids.”

How did it go down?
“I had a huge response. Every DJ is doing house sets so I think people appreciated a good old-fashioned party night.”

How did it compare with DJing in a club?
“I did struggle a bit because I like to read the crowd and adapt my sets as I go. It’s hard playing on your own, it felt like I was just doing a radio show.”

Have you seen much else on Facebook?
“Lots of drag queens are going live most nights of the week which is fun. I try to catch as many shows as I can.”

Any tips for keeping busy while in lockdown?
“I think trying to get into a routine, maybe start by making your bed then find daily jobs to achieve. I find lounging around makes me feel depressed, so I just try to stay busy.”

What are your plans for when it’s all over?
“Go back to work, I miss my job so badly. Entertaining is a massive part of me, so I feel a bit lost. Oh, and I want to go to Nandos.”

What do you miss the most?
“My job and people, I miss chatting face to face, being able to go shopping and going out whenever I want to.”

Any words of wisdom to keep us going?
“Use this time to relax and do things you never have time for. Life is so hectic, look at this time as a gift. There is nothing we can do to change our situation so try to find the positives... Stay home and wash your hands.”

Claire’s top five tunes to make you smile...
- Weekend Blinding Lights
- Dua Lipa Physical
- Camila Cabello ft Dababy My Oh My
- Lizzo Good as Hell
- Dove Cameron Genie in a Bottle

FOLLOW
- Claire Fuller DJ

DJ JAZZY JANE

DJ Jazzy Jane is the Fresh Princess bossing it behind the decks at some of Bar 7 Crawley’s biggest parties. Here’s what she’s been up to while in lockdown and her Top Tunes to put a smile on your face...

Hey Jane, what have you been up to?
“Hi, I’ve been putting up regular podcasts on Mixcloud and also been live streaming most nights on Facebook Live and on Twitch. I’ve also been spending time sorting out my existing track collection and looking for new tracks and remixes to keep my streams fresh and varied.”

How are the online sets going down?
“I’ve had a lot of positive feedback from people enjoying listening to my streams. I found by doing them regularly at a similar time each night more people get to know when I’m playing and tune in if they like what they’ve heard. I do get more viewers on Facebook than on Twitch at the moment but I’ve only just started using that platform.”

Is it hard to connect with the audience?
“When streaming you do get interaction with people commenting or asking for requests which is great, I love that interaction, but I do really miss playing to a live audience. In venues I play off the vibe of the crowd, seeing how people react to different tracks, the regulars who you can guess what they’re going to ask for, the bar staff who dance behind the bar all night, the fist bumps and high fives across the booth and the banter that makes the night. For me just seeing people enjoying themselves and playing off the whole energy of the night is what I love.”

It’s great to see so many DJs and drag queens using Facebook Live...
“Yeah I’ve seen several DJs that I know who are doing live sets regularly, mostly on Facebook Live. It’s good to watch their streams too and see what they have been up to. Streaming does seem to have massively increased now all DJs are at home and still want to keep their practice and profiles up.”

Any tips to keep us sane during lockdown?
“I like to keep my brain busy so I use the time productively, sorting out playlists and digital record crates, servicing equipment and sorting cables to see what I’ve got or need. I’ve been going back over a lot of my music and re-discovering some great tunes I haven’t heard in ages. It’s good to have little projects on the go as well, such as decorating or building/refurbishing furniture then in the evening you can relax knowing you have achieved something useful.”

Plans for the future?
“Must be time for a night out and a couple of beers. Honestly I can’t wait to get back to performing to some live audiences in venues again and getting out doing some mobile discos. I do think I will keep up the live streaming, some from home studio and some from the DJ booth too. I also can’t wait to get back to my other passion which is obstacle racing. I’ve been exercising at home but it will be awesome to get back to doing races again.”

Anything you miss?
“I really miss seeing everyone at my regular venues, the bar staff, management, door staff and regulars who all make my night. I love the energy and atmosphere of a busy venue which inspires you to make sure everyone has a great night. I also miss doing my work in outdoor events where you meet some great people and every day is so different, plus I can’t wait to get back to training and running with my team-mates from the obstacle race team, Team Nuts.”

Any words of wisdom to keep us going?
“I like to divide time into working and training and running with my team-mates from the obstacle race team, Team Nuts.”

Jazzy Jane’s Top 5 tracks to cheer us up...
- Justin Timberlake Can’t Stop This Feeling
- Bruno Mars Uptown Funk
- Outkast Hey Yo
- Spiller Groovejet (If This Ain’t Love)
- Robin S Show Me Love

FOLLOW
- Jazzy Jane UK

Any tips for keeping busy while in lockdown?
“Hi Jane, what have you been up to while in lockdown and her Top 5 tracks to cheer us up…
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- Spiller Groovejet (If This Ain’t Love)
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“I think trying to get into a routine, maybe start by making your bed then find daily jobs to achieve. I find lounging around makes me feel depressed, so I just try to stay busy.”

What are your plans for when it’s all over?
“Go back to work, I miss my job so badly. Entertaining is a massive part of me, so I feel a bit lost. Oh, and I want to go to Nandos.”

What do you miss the most?
“My job and people, I miss chatting face to face, being able to go shopping and going out whenever I want to.”

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“Use this time to relax and do things you never have time for. Life is so hectic, look at this time as a gift. There is nothing we can do to change our situation so try to find the positives... Stay home and wash your hands.”

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FOLLOW
- Claire Fuller DJ
FOLLOW and fabulous celebration of disco fused with a fresh pop sound - Tracks I've been listening to in order to stay chipper are; pass if we all stay in it together.”

This is definitely the thing that I'm missing the most - working and in the glorious and community spirited venues that I get to work in. “Once this pandemic is over I plan to have and work at the biggest parties ever, showcasing my fabulous feel good pop anthems whilst making people happy. If I could give a few final words they would mean time; just imagine how big and buzzing the 2021 event will be. In the meantime;

Any tips to keep busy?
“Clean and declutter your homes, cook something new and fabulous, take up a new online course or teach yourself a new skill, find a way to give back to communities/groups in need and check in with everybody that you love as often as possible.”

There's lots of online stuff popping up, especially live cabaret...
“Yes, I'm in regular contact with all of my drag family whom I work with on the scene. Lots of them are doing regular fabulous online shows including Mrs Moore, Baga Chipz, Miss Penny, Mary Mac, Lucinda Lashes, Miss Jason - the list goes on. So proud of my gurls.”

We're going to really miss Pride this year...
“I'm so gutted that Pride has been cancelled, it’s an event I’ve been a part of for many, many years. It’s for the greater good though, and just imagine how big and buzzing the 2021 event will be. In the meantime; Mariah Carey and lip-sync party for one in the living room with bubbles.”

Plans for when this is over?
“Once this pandemic is over I plan to have and work at the biggest parties ever, showcasing my fabulous feel good pop anthems whilst in the glorious and community spirited venues that I get to work in. This is definitely the thing that I'm missing the most - working and making people happy. If I could give a few final words they would just simply to be keep seeing the positives and know that this will pass if we all stay in it together.”

Tracks I've been listening to in order to stay chipper are;
- DOJA CAT Say So
- LADY GAGA Stupid Love
- KHALID featuring Disclosure Know Your Worth
- DUA LIPA’s entire new album Future Nostalgia, which is such a fabulous celebration of disco fused with a fresh pop sound - Physical and Levitating are highlights
- DONNA SUMMER, DIANA ROSS, NILE RODGERS lots of disco classics

FOLLOW
- DJ Trick Brighton

You've been quite busy online. Give us the lowdown in a nutshell...
K: “We're doing just what you’d expect two old lady DJs would do during a global crisis. Staying camp and carrying on. We’ve Gaffa-taped together a home studio so we can record our 1BTN radio shows and we will be streaming live DJ sets to the world once we’ve worked out which cables go where. Yes, more DJs playing tunes in their front room. Just what the world needs right now.”

Q: “I’ve been sharing my culinary triumphs with the world courtesy of Queenie Cooks in the Social Isolation Kitchen, a bit of a mouthful but worth it just to see my banana cakes. Plus my cartoon venture Queenie’s Strip Service is banishing the boredom with drawings of animals to download and colour in.” A side from music, how are you keeping yourself busy?
Q: “I'm still working (if remotely) but attempt to do yoga every morning, draw my Ouch House Diaries and rehearse with our street’s Zoom choir. If there’s any time left I’ll squeeze in a session of Lottie Croucher’s fabulous disco work outs on YouTube.”

K: I’m keeping myself busy by avoiding Queenie when she's doing her Zoom choir/workouts/yoga. It’s carnage. Other than that I’m in the garden growing veg or walking our new rescue dog Mr Arnstein. (And yes he’s named after a certain Funny Girl movie. Did I not mention I was camp?)

Brighton & Hove Pride thoughts?
K: “Hopefully finding a way to DJ again. With actual people. As for Pride we were both so saddened by its cancellation. It is central to our city’s LGBTIQ+ year, not just as an event but as a fundraiser. I only hope we all continue to support Brighton & Hove Pride, the Brighton Rainbow Fund and to donate if able. During this time of lockdown it’s vital to ensure Pride can continue to fund those keeping our communities connected.”

Do you reckon the scene will bounce back bigger and better?
Q: “I hope so. Community seems more important than ever and I know once the scene is able to take tentative steps towards normality it will do all it can to support our amazing LGBTIQ+ family. However, things move forward so we must and will find ways of coming together.”

What do you miss the most?
K: “The freedom to see beloved friends and family, to dance at the disco, go where. Yes, more DJs playing tunes in their front room. Just what the world needs right now.”

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What do you miss the most?
K: “The freedom to see beloved friends and family, to dance at the disco, on Patterns terrace, beachside at The Tempest or in the 1BTN studio. To travel anywhere to watch a sunset, listen to the birds sing or smell the blossom. The simplest of things.”

Plans for when it’s all over?
Q: “I may join a real choir.”
K: “I may buy some noise cancelling headphones.”

Words of wisdom to keep us going?
K: “We will all dance again. It may be two metres apart and old dears like us may have to find fake ID to prove we’re young enough to be allowed in, but we will all dance again.”

Top 5 tunes to put a smile on our chops....
- DAVE LEATHERMAN & Bruce Nolan Just Put On Your Horns Suppressed
- DEMI REQUISIMO Vernon Semi Delicious
- WHITNEY HOUSTON Million Dollar Bill (Knuckles Club Mix) Arista
- C J & CO Devils Gun (Tech Support Edit) White Label
- AL KENT Pick Me Up Million Dollar Disco

The Wildblood & Queenie Show on 1BTN 101.4FM DAB+ www.1btn.fm 1st & 3rd Friday every month 1pm-4pm.
www.wildbloodandqueenie.com
What’s the response been like?
“It’s been lush so far. I’m very lucky to have formed a loving and loyal audience over the past seven or eight years, some have been glued the whole time and many have been sucked in along the way but it’s great to create content and know that it’ll be enjoyed. In terms of income, thousands of performers have lost their entire income but PayPal is a great way to earn some tips to cover rent or a food shop and to be able to create content and get my food shop done with it each week has been super wholesome.”

How does it compare with a live audience?
“It’s nothing like a live audience in front of you; the energy, the adrenaline, the back and forth exchange of positive and joyous vibes. The online world is thriving and keeping us all entertained at this current time but I can’t wait to get back on a stage at a live show.”

Have you seen much else online?
“So many amazing artists are seizing this moment and succeeding with it and it’s a pleasure to see. From Biqtch Puddin’ and their insanely amazing Digital Drag Show line-ups, Prinx Chiyo’s Kick Boxing Sessions, Dolly Trolley’s Drag Aerobics in collaboration with Ginger Phlappage, Harpies Live Streams, Mary Mac’s Sunday Show Stream, Luna Cortez Singing Sessions, Bar Wotever’s Cabaret, internationally there are so many live stream shows happening every day from workshops to full-on productions and it’s incredible to witness.”

Any tips to keep us busy?
“Create a routine while eliminating time, for example; ‘when I wake up I shall...’, ‘before I have dinner’, ‘after breakfast I’ll...‘ Removing time from a routine allows it to be a lot less forced and better for your headspace. Setting yourself one goal a day helps too, no matter how big or how small that goal is. From cleaning your kitchen to going on a 10,000 step walk, reading three chapters of your book or even making a meal from scratch. Remove the illusion of success and triumph others may pressure on you and create your own rules and your own routine that makes YOU feel good.”

What are your plans for when it’s all over?
“To make up for lost time. In all honesty, I expect once normality returns for venues it’ll take them a while to get shows back up and running so we mustn’t jump at people when it does return and give them the time to gradually bring all the shows back in motion. I look forward to thriving through live shows again whenever those opportunities may return.”

What do you miss the most?
“I miss going to the cinema in all honesty, it’s my ‘me time’. Being within a dark room where everyone is forced to be quiet and enjoy the movie is a happy place of mine. I miss shows most of all, performing keeps me going and is my own little therapist that allows me to exhale. I also miss the option of meeting up with someone on Grindr, I barely do it but it’s nice to have the option, you know?”

Any words of wisdom to get us through?
“Practise optimism and gratitude. Be grateful for the roof above your head, the water you can drink and wash with, the fridge stocked with food, the entertainment at your finger tips and take advantage of the accessibility of communication we have with our phones, tablets and computers. Many people out there have sweet f-all.”

“Take care, self isolate, only go out for essentials or exercise and wash your damn hands.”

**CRYSTAL LUBRIKUNT**

Crystal Lubrikunt, the standout Brighton-born drag performer turned international lip sync assassin storms stages left, right, and centre. From London to Scotland, Iceland to New York City, she moves her lips and shakes them hips while empowering people of all walks of life to be their own boss, to unleash the diva within and be true to themselves. Here she shares the goss of what’s HOT online, what she’ll be doing once these days are in the rear-view mirror, and lends some comforting words to get us through these dodgy days.

**Hey Crystal. How’s it going?**
“Hey lovelies. I’ve been doing alright, getting creative when I can, getting my daily dose of fresh air, you know what I mean? I’ve been working on my YouTube channel a lot since lockdown so go search ‘Crystal Lubrikunt’ on YouTube and have a gander.”

**What’s the response been like?**
“It’s been lush so far. I’m very lucky to have formed a loving and loyal audience over the past seven or eight years, some have been glued the whole time and many have been sucked in along the way but it’s great to create content and know that it’ll be enjoyed. In terms of income, thousands of performers have lost their entire income but PayPal is a great way to earn some tips to cover rent or a food shop and to be able to create content and get my food shop done with it each week has been super wholesome.”

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“Take care, self isolate, only go out for essentials or exercise and wash your damn hands.”

**FOLLOW**

Crystal Lubrikunt ~ crystalubrikunt
ROCOCO CHANEL

Rococo Chanel, host and co-creator of Polyglamorous, pushes the boundaries of drag with their drag sister, Lydia L’Scabies. Here, they spill their guts and tell us what they’ve been up to during lockdown…

Hey Rococo, tell us a bit about yourself…
“Hello. My name is Rococo Chanel and I’m a transgender drag performer. In more ordinary times, you can catch me haunting Polyglamorous at Chalk, The Powder Room at Club Revenge, or perhaps performing with Cinebra at Brighton Fringe.”

How have you been keeping yourself occupied?
“I was recently part of Donna Trump’s Queeriosity Unplugged, which was a wonderful show with drag performance from all around the world. It was received incredibly well and also raised over £2,000 to help fund NHS PPE masks for the frontline medical staff. There’s another on May 2, so keep an eye out.

“I also streamed Cinebra: A History of Horror, an award-winning musical comedy from myself and my drag sister, Lydia L’Scabies, which was a joy to be able to share while we’re unable to get out and perform at the moment. It’s been wonderful to connect with our audience online, and see how eager people have been to adapt as viewers to watch and support drag during this strange time that’s taken a toll on a lot of artists.”

Do you miss audience interaction?
“Preparing, performing and seeing the audience react in real time to shows brings an adrenaline rush not dissimilar to performing live. Or perhaps I’ve forgotten what it feels like, and will take anything.”

Does performing to a camera come naturally?
“I’ve worked a fair amount in front of a camera before, so it doesn’t feel too alien. Either way, everybody seems to be adjusting to the new norm.”

Any tips to keep us sane during lockdown?
“Read, write, paint, keep in touch with loved ones, enjoy the fleeting sunlight on your daily walk - whatever keeps you relaxed and happy. Now is the perfect time to start that hobby you’ve never found the time for.”

What are your plans for when this is all over?
“I live 30 seconds from the beach - I’ll be going straight there to enjoy what I’ve been missing. Then it will be time to plot and throw the best party Brighton has ever seen - we’ll be needing it.”

What do you miss the most?
“The freedom to come and go as I please. I’d appreciate even the best party Brighton has ever seen or not. Everyone and their nan has an OnlyFans account now it seems…”

Any words of wisdom to keep us going?
“Keep as positive as you can. If you’re isolated at home, try to enjoy the breather from day-to-day life. This is only temporary, and if we all do our part to keep each other safe, it will be over before we know it.”

FOLLOW
• rococo_chanel • Rococo Chanel The Parrot

LYDIA L’Scabies

Self-proclaimed Queen Flea of Brighton, Lydia L’Scabies is theatrically and contextually motivated with a face that says: “Wear a Condom.” The Parasite Princess shares what she’s been up to while in lockdown and why you can’t keep a good bitch down…

Hey Lydia, what have you been up to?
“I’ve been doing a few things online with my London gals who were ever so kind to involve me. Won’t lie to you, it’s been a strange transition from stage to desktop, but I’m in the swing of it now. Me and my sis Rococo Chanel streamed our international award-winning show Cinebra: A History Of Horror which had an amazing response. I’ve really enjoyed making my current acts into video format, so do keep an eye out.”

Busy girl?
“Honestly it’s been kind of wild, I did a zoom event called Queer House Party Live co-run by my friend Harry, and I haven’t seen anything like it. I was sceptical of the whole online translation of things initially but now I’m in the swing of it, seemingly, it’s wonderful seeing that we cabaret and nightlife creatures still have a thorough purpose. It’s been eye-opening as well because seeing this kind of response as a result of the same circumstance we’re all under has given me a kick up the arse to not worry so much about it all and just keep being that bitch.”

You must miss being absolutely revolting in public…
“I do miss the sound and direct feel of an audience, don’t get me wrong, but being able to read stuff that comes in puts it in writing which kinda immortalises it in a way, it’s lovely.”

Where’s your beady eye been peeping?
“Oh hun everyone’s doing something in front of a camera, family friendly or not. Everyone and their nan has an OnlyFans account now it seems…”

Any tips to keep us from tearing out our weaves?
“Always try to achieve something a day, showering does count.”

What are your plans for when this is all over?
“Christ, going to someone else’s house would be a treat right now. I think why you can’t keep a good bitch down.”

Anything you miss?
“Travelling and buzzing about the country and town alike.”

Any words of wisdom?
“Don’t worry about drinking too much, there’s not much else to do, but keep your sleeping pattern in check, if not it only takes two sleeps to fix. Always tidy your room, and don’t play Monopoly.”

FOLLOW
• Mite Ridden Slag • lydialscabies • wereallylikemovies
Have you seen much else online?
“I have indeed. I’ve been tuning in to loads of the digital drag and cabaret shows. Every Saturday I tune into Alfie Ordinary’s Drag Brunch and do some of my house projects while watching him be a camp old bitch. Also been absolutely loving Myra Dubois’ live streams.”

Any tips to keep us sane?
“If you want to be busy, absolutely go for it. Though for some people the idea of having to do things maybe makes it worse. Personally I’ve loved doing my home stuff and working on future plans for work related things. My biggest advice would be to do what makes you happy, as I suspect we may be here for quite some time.”

What are your plans for when it’s over?
“Hopefully go back to normal(ish) but I’ll have learnt a load of new songs and have a tonne of new costumes.”

What do you miss the most?
“My audiences, I love being a drag queen so much and a huge part of that is the people. I miss getting to have fun with everyone.”

Any words of wisdom?
“Just keep smiling, this will all be over at some point and we can all have a huge party together. Also a huge shout out to all our key workers at the moment, keeping us all safe.”

FOLLOW
Mister Joe Black Music
www.misterjoeblack.com

POPPYCOCK

POPPYCOCK is an award-winning drag queen, performing up and down the country at the nation’s top cabaret venues. With a background in musical theatre, her shows are packed with immaculate vocals, insane dance routines and of course absolute poppycock. Here’s what she’s been up to and her plans for the future...

How have you been keeping yourself busy?
“I’ve been doing a live stream show every Wednesday and Sunday at 8pm on my Instagram and FB pages, all accompanied on the acoustic guitar by my very talented partner.”

Has it gone down well?
“We’ve had a great response from a really loyal bunch of people that watch it every time. We just have a great laugh and spread some joy.”

How does it compare with live performances?
Well the main difference is that I don’t have to wear as many pairs of tights ha. I do miss having an audience but I do get to sing with a guitar and really just jam it out.”

Are other performers doing similar things?
“Yeah there’s quite a few I think, we’ve all got to do something to stop us going crazy. Plus we need to keep lifting spirits in these uncertain times.”

FOLLOW
ItsPoppycock

JOE BLACK
Gin drinking cabaret darling, musical comedy misfit, drag clown and acid tongued ringmaster, Joe Black takes an audience firmly by the hand and guides them to a place where the strange and unusual reign supreme. The star of cabaret noir shares how he’s spending his time and what he’s been up for LGBTQ+ mental health charity, MindOut.

Hey Joe, tell us a bit about yourself... “I’m Joe Black. Cabaret performer with an inclination towards the grotesque, macabre, campy and glam. Musician, comedian and accidental Glenn Close impersonator.”

What have you been up to? How did your MindOut show go?
“I decided as I was going to be spending so much time at home, I’d work on some stuff around the house. So I’ve been repainting furniture and learning some craft and DIY things. My gramophone even had some work done to it and now it’s a glorious red and gold monstrosity. The MindOut show was fab. I had a great time and we raised £400 for the charity, which during this time is more important than ever.”

Have you seen much else online?
“I have indeed. I’ve been tuning in to loads of the digital drag and cabaret shows. Every Saturday I tune into Alfie Ordinary’s Drag Brunch and do some of my house projects while watching him be a camp old bitch. Also been absolutely loving Myra Dubois’ live streams.”

Any tips to keep us sane?
“If you want to be busy, absolutely go for it. Though for some people the idea of having to do things maybe makes it worse. Personally I’ve loved doing my home stuff and working on future plans for work related things. My biggest advice would be to do what makes you happy, as I suspect we may be here for quite some time.”

What are your plans for when it’s over?
“Hopefully go back to normal(ish) but I’ll have learnt a load of new songs and have a tonne of new costumes.”

What do you miss the most?
“My audiences, I love being a drag queen so much and a huge part of that is the people. I miss getting to have fun with everyone.”

Any words of wisdom?
“Just keep smiling, this will all be over at some point and we can all have a huge party together. Also a huge shout out to all our key workers at the moment, keeping us all safe.”

FOLLOW
Mister Joe Black Music
www.misterjoeblack.com
If you put Kate Bush, Madonna and David Bowie into a blender you’d get Paul Diello. Paul Diello, multi-talented musician talks about new music, tracks to cheer us up and post-lockdown plans.

Hey Paul, tell us a bit about yourself and your music?
“I’m a Brighton-based queer singer-songwriter. I’ve been making music and putting out records as a solo artist for 10 years and I’m putting the finishing touches to my new LP, which will be ready for release soon.”

What have you been up to while in lockdown?
“I’ve been using the time at home to get creative; I’ve spent lots of time at the piano, writing new bits and pieces and concepts and ideas for the music videos to accompany the songs on my new album. I’ve done an online performance which was so much fun, I was actually more nervous for that than I’ve been for regular gigs in a long time. I did a live stream on Friday, April 24 from my Facebook page (Paul Diello Music) where I performed all the songs from my debut album, which was originally released in 2009.”

Any tips to keep our readers busy?
“It’s a good time to catch up with old friends or people you’ve been meaning to meet up with and not had the chance to, video chats are a god send at the moment. Friends working from home who have kids tell me that writing a daily plan really helps keep some structure to the day.”

Plans for the future?
“To release my album and make music videos for all nine tracks. I’m also making an album with my acoustic duo side project, Under the Ivy, which I’ll continue with once I can return to the studio. I’ll also be taking my show Epicene, a gender blending celebration of iconic women in music, out on the road once we can go out again.”

What do you miss the most?
“Seeing my friends and family in the flesh and gigging in front of a live audience. Also walking outside feeling complete freedom.”

“While it’s great to use this time to get creative or work on a hobby or be productive, it’s also completely fine to just chill out and take it all in and not put any pressure on yourself. It’s bonkers out there at the moment so it’s really important to look after yourself and your mental health and if you’re struggling, don’t be afraid to ask for help.”

Paul’s top 5 tracks to cheer us up...
- RACHAEL DADD - Cut My Roots
- FEIST - 1234
- ALDOUS HARDING - The Barrell
- EURYTHMICS - The First Cut
- MADONNA - Spotlight

Any words of wisdom to get us through?
“Absolutely, there’s so much going on with all cabaret artists, it’s incredible in these times we have this platform to entertain and keep connected with one another. Check Live Lounge Lockdown, Pixie Presents as well as all the usual bars who are posting links to all live feeds.”

Hey Electric, what have you been up to?
“I did an online performance on March 28. It was unusual to be honest, no audience, no DJ, no bar (had to do my own ha), but then the performance buzz just hit again and it felt like I was back on stage.”

How was the response?
“Just amazing, if anything the feedback from viewers and the interaction made me feel like I was back in a bar doing cabaret, it was incredible to gain some normality in these crazy times.”

Must be strange not to see a sea of faces?
“Oh wow... I miss being able to perform more than anything, once a week had passed it really hit me how much I miss it, hence why I did a show on Facebook. I also miss Greggs so much.”

What are your plans for when this is over?
“Go back on the road and entertain you all, see family and friends, hit the gym (I wish, ha), and show my face at every fast food restaurant.”

What do you miss the most?
“I miss being able to perform more than anything, once a week had passed it really hit me how much I miss it, hence why I did a show on Facebook. I also miss Greggs so much.”

We’re going to miss Brighton & Hove Pride this year...
“Absolutely heartbreaking news however I couldn’t imagine it being an easy decision for organisers to make during these unprecedented times. I’m sure we’ll have some parties around Kempstown once we’re able to and Pride 2021 is just going to be incredible.”

Any words of wisdom to get us through?
“The best thing I can say is that we’re all in this together, we’re not alone, we will get through this, stay safe it will get better.”

FOLLOW
- Electric Blue Drag
CHERRY LIQUOR

Cherry Liquor is tacky, camp, eccentric and sure to get the party started. Known for her over the top style, Cherry has performed all over the UK, as well as internationally in San Francisco and Iceland (not the supermarket). What has the queen of tart been up to, other than missing the D…?

Hey Cherry, what have you been up to?
“Learning new songs. It’s a miracle. Haha. Cleaned the lace on my wigs. Another miracle… Oh I have been doing Cherry’s Bingo from my Facebook page. It’s been fun and stopped me from losing the plot.”

How’s your online stuff been going down?
“It’s been really fun. The most annoying thing is the time lag and when the video tends to stop mid show.. Haha. Hilarious apparently.”

Sounds like a hoot...
“Oh it’s weird. When you give loads of energy and then get nothing back apart from a thumbs up emoji. Worst thing is when you forget a lyric and signal for the audience to “sing that bit”, WHOOPS.”

Have you seen much else online?
“Girl, it’s all over my newsfeed but you know what, I bloody love it. So good that all the girls are still working and thinking of inventive ways to keep people entertained.”

Any tips to keep us busy while in lockdown?
“Plan your time and don’t do everything at once. And make it fun.”

What are your plans when this is all over?
“Well I really need to get my hair cut. Seriously though, I’ll first go and visit family and then close friends as a priority. I’ll also get in touch with venues that had to postpone or cancel gigs and re-book them.”

FOLLOW
@thecherryliquor

JP CHRISTIAN

Vocalist JP Christian is known as the Human Jukebox whose cabaret sets are like a potted history of popular music. Here’s what he’s been up to while in lockdown and why music is his ‘pick me up’.

Hey JP, tell us a bit about yourself...
“I’m originally from Bath and started singing around 25 years ago, first in a couple of bands and then solo. Then I was happily lured into the Bath, Bristol and Cardiff LGBTQ+ cabaret scene by a couple of drag queens. Having relocated to the south east, I’ve been performing in Brighton since 2009 and I love coming here. I have regular gigs at The Zone and always take part in Brighton & Hove Pride. Music has been a huge passion from a very early age and I’m very happy to be able to be a regular part of the Brighton scene, doing something I love.”

What have you been up to while in lockdown?
“I’ve been keeping fit on the cross-trainer machine in the hall and going for long walks locally. I’ve also done three online ‘mini’ gigs, which were very well received and I’m looking forward to doing some more.”

Any tips to keep us from losing our minds?
“I’d say it’s a perfect opportunity to read more, listen to more music and catch up with missed TV. It’s also a perfect time to Skype or FaceTime family and friends as much as possible. Keep active, try to get up at a reasonable hour and get dressed as it’s so easy to become lethargic if you stay in your pyjamas (if you wear them).”

What are your plans when this is all over?
“Well I really need to get my hair cut. Seriously though, I’ll first go and visit family and then close friends as a priority. I’ll also get in touch with venues that had to postpone or cancel gigs and re-book them.”

Anything you miss?
“Proper fish and chips from the local chippy. More importantly I’ve missed seeing my family and friends in person. I also miss the live interaction you get with an audience, so I’m looking forward to going back to performing in the usual way as soon as possible.”

We’re really going to miss Brighton & Hove Pride...
“I love Brighton & Hove Pride and I’ll really miss it. I usually do a small set at several venues and I’ll really miss the atmosphere. This year would have been my 12th visit, but no matter what I’ll be back next year.”

Any words of wisdom to keep us going?
“Keep active and stay in touch with family and friends as much as possible. It can be tough being isolated but try not to get too down - my personal pick me up is music and plenty of it.”

FOLLOW
JP Christian
“Being a drag queen can seem insignificant when the UK’s on lockdown, but hopefully entertainers like me can still bring laughter, joy, and music to people’s lives”

Snow White Trash

Snow White Trash is the UK’s #saxydragqueen tooting her horn and singing live all over the world. Here’s what she’s been up to, the best online performances she’s seen from her drag queen sisters, and what she’ll be doing, in the nuddy, once this is all over...

Hey, how’s it going?

“Hello. What a bizarre world we’re living in. First I want to say a huge thank you to the NHS and all the front line and essential workers across the country putting their health at risk to look after us. You are all incredible. Being a drag queen can seem insignificant when the UK’s on lockdown, but hopefully entertainers like me can still bring laughter, joy, and music to people’s lives.

“During this time I have been STAYING INSIDE (I’m looking at you with your BBQ on Brighton beach and seven friends, Karen) and washing my hands. I’m also very lucky to have my partner, who usually works at Kindling Restaurant on East Street, at home with me. He’s the restaurant manager but is also an amazing cook so I’m not going hungry by any means. I’ve also been doing some live shows over on my Facebook page.”

How are they going down?

“The response has been incredible. People who might not get to see me perform regularly (like my parents who live in Chicago) get to watch me sing and play the saxophone in a wig and a dress on their phone screens sat in their living rooms. The wonders of technology. People talking in the live comments is like being in bar as well. I just hope everyone watching has a glass of something in their hand. The shows are completely free but I do accept tips via www.paypal.me/edparry95”

Must be quite different to performing to a packed bar, a microphone in your hand, a half a lager some drunk idiot spilt down the back of your dress five minutes before you were meant to go on... But there’s still a weird thrill in performing to an empty living room. It actually takes more confidence because you don’t get the instant gratification from an audience. You really need to believe in yourself and trust in what you do because you haven’t got a bar cheering you on.

“Having said that, I’ve actually been very lucky to have a few of my lovely neighbours watch from a socially acceptable distance through the window. That really helps - actual applause. Even if they’re all sat two metres apart on garden chairs.”

Have you seen any other good stuff online?

“Yes. Facebook is now lit up with performers barking at you from their living rooms and it’s a joy. A few highlights include: Spice’s Fact Hunt, which is hard to miss - is a great pub quiz every Friday on Spice’s Facebook page live from Lanzarote; Cherry Bomb’s Blankety Blank - I was a contestant recently and it was a hoot. Six people on Zoom on her TV, then her on Facebook live doing Blankety Blank with the audience. Chaos. Hysterical. I believe she’s going to do The Price Is Right too. 1990s TV game shows and drag queens, what more could you want?. Check out Cherry’s Facebook page; and the Bedford Tavern’s Piano Bingo (without a piano) on Adam Brook’s Facebook page, he runs his infamous Piano Bingo from his living room with ahem ‘special assistance’ from his husband, Tony. Carnage. Alcohol required.”

Any tips to keep us from going insane?

“I’ve seen a lot of things on how to stay productive and start new things and how to stay creative but honestly if you don’t want to then don’t. Take the time to breathe. Do nothing. Sleep. Don’t put pressure on yourself. Try not to compare yourself to Kyle and Stacy who are running for an hour every day, completing 27 jigsaws a week, and have learnt Spanish, Hungarian, and rudimentary Klingon.

You do you babes. Go watch Moana. Again.”

What are your plans for when it’s all over?

“Fine, I’ll finally put clothes back on. Actually, screw clothes, I’m going to the nudist beach. Who’s coming?”

Anything you miss?

“I miss mooching. You know, just having a mooch around town with some pals. Wondering around the Lanes, having a drink in a pub, then another, then another... I moved to Brighton from London last year and I love living in the centre of town and being able to walk everywhere. I also really miss the tight-knit community I made here so quickly. I was welcomed so beautifully by the people here, they support me so much and I’m very lucky.”

We’re going to miss Brighton & Hove Pride...

“I feel very sorry for all the charities and local businesses that will be directly affected by the cancellation. It’s the biggest event of the year for them and hopefully Brighton can come back and support them when the time is right. Obviously, we must put people’s health first and I understand why Prides across the country have been cancelled. Let’s hope the weather’s crap. Perhaps Mrs Moore, Lola Lasagne, Rose Garden, Sally Vate, and I can do a Pussycat Dolls Drag Tribute Act on Facebook live? Shotgun Nicole.”

Any words of wisdom to keep us going?

“Stay inside. Wash your hands. Hug the people in your household often.”

FOLLOW

SnowWTrash edwhitetrash
“I’m just going to work hard and try to give people as good a show as I possibly can from my living room.”

Drag With No Name gives their all to put a smile on your face with parodies, silly sketches, sassy vocals and costume changes galore. What’s this queen of the scene been up to on the interweb and what are their plans post-lockdown?

Hey DWNN, what have you been up to?

“Hey. I’ve been busy. Well - my brain has, working overtime on working out how to get some fun into people’s lives. So yes - I did a website for 10 days straight after the lockdown came into place, I’ve been making videos and a couple of shows and a couple of fun Bingo nights too. And, last Friday, I did my very first Facebook live show, which was immense fun.”

What’s the response been like?

“Amazing. I’m so overwhelmed by people’s kind words and love. It’s been that good that it’s going to be a regular thing on a Friday night at 7.30pm direct from my living room. And will be until the day we’re allowed back out of our houses again, LOL. And, my boyfriend has also got with the fun of it all, and we’ve created a new drag monster. Delilah is her name, and she’s getting more attention than I am, which is ever so slightly irksome to say the least.”

How does it compare to you tearing up our LGBTQ+ venues?

“The obvious is there’s no audience, and being an artist that loves interaction with a crowd, its limitation was very unnerving at first. I love taking people’s drinks, taking the p***, jumping on people, crowdsurfing, climbing on bars... But I obviously can’t do any of that. But it’s still fun, and we’re all in the same boat - me performing and those watching at home. You know from their words in the chat during the show that they also don’t want to be in this situation and would rather be down the pub - but this is now and we’ve got to make it as much fun as possible. Oh how we’ll all look back and laugh some day.”

Any tips to keep us from climbing the walls?

“Eat lots and drink more. This will all be over soon, so make the most of it.”

What are your plans for when this is all over?

“To stop eating lots and drink less.”

What do you miss the most?

“People. I miss faces. I miss cuddles and kisses from people I know up and down the country. I miss being in the same room as my friends.”

We’re going to miss Brighton & Hove Pride...

“It’s very sad. Not just Brighton & Hove Pride - ALL Prides. Obviously I do a great deal of them each year, here and abroad, and when we’re on stage there’s a certain vibe that can’t always be replicated in a bar during the rest of the year, and I’ll miss that a great deal. Again, it’s not seeing all those faces up and down the country.”

Any words of wisdom to keep us going?

“Eat lots and drink more. Ha ha ha. Just be happy. When you’re feeling down - and we all will at some point on numerous occasions - just give yourself a little shake and a telling off, and wake up to the fact we’re all in the same situation. We’ve lost jobs, we’ve lost contact with people, and we’ve no idea when it will end. But... there is help there, we can still chat to our friends online, and it WILL end soon. I won’t allow a situation I can’t control make me sad, there are a lot worse situations to be in, and we’ll get through it all together. Wine does help though.

“Sending everyone lots and lots of love xxx”

Follow DragWithNoName @dragwithnoname
Hey Linda, how’s it going?
“On a day to day basis since the lockdown I’ve been working as a key worker/care worker for the elderly with dementia. As far as Linda Bacardi is concerned, care work has meant she’s taken a back seat. However, on my birthday on Sunday, April 5 she did a Facebook live party with white wine, gags and funny Agony Aunt resolutions.”

Did It go well?
“For myself, nothing can beat the buzz of performing to a live crowd. The mix of vibe, ambience and alcohol. The online experience is something new to explore for many performers and can seem difficult when it seems more one way. However, the challenge is good and reception encouraging.”

Have you seen others doing Facebook Live?
“Drag With No Name, Baga Chipz, Stephanie Von Clitz, Mrs Moore and Charlie Hides to name a few. It’s a testament to someone’s popularity when their followers tune in to watch them try and do online what they normally do on stage.”

Any tips while in lockdown?
“Stay positive. Use the time to do something productive that you wouldn’t normally have been bothered with. Dig out the caustic soda and clean the toilet pan with a toothbrush, lol. Stay happy. Things will get better in time.”

What are your plans for when this is all over?
“Socialising with friends by day. Being able to get to reach an audience across the world with friends and get to see other drag queens perform... I can’t wait to do that again - I even promise not to moan about the trains. In the meantime I guess I have time to learn some new tracks and chat with friends on social media...”

What do you miss the most?
“I’ve really missed travelling around the country for gigs and seeing friends in London, Brighton and Southampton. It’s more than just a gig ‘cause you catch up with friends and get to see other drag queens perform...”

Any thoughts on Brighton & Hove Pride?
“It’s one of my favourite Pride events... the way the entire city gets wrapped in a giant rainbow. I was on a float a couple of years ago with Kara Van Park and it was one of the most amazing experiences of my life... and of course my traditional 10 mins on the back of a lorry for the Queens Arms followed by an hour of my ‘exceptional’ customer service on the outside bar... I swear it’s the only reason they book me.”

Any tips for our readers in lockdown?
“Stay positive. Use the time to do something productive that you wouldn’t normally have been bothered with. Dig out the caustic soda and clean the toilet pan with a toothbrush, lol. Stay happy. Things will get better in time.”

Any tips while in lockdown?
“Hopefully everyone else is keeping themselves challenged... These are weird times we’re living in and I think we all need to reach out to friends, maybe drop a message to someone you haven’t spoken to in a while. That message could be just what they need to lift their day.”

Drop a message to someone you haven’t spoken to in a while. That message could be just what they need to lift their day”
DAVINA SPARKLE

The outrageous Davina Sparkle is one of the UK’s best stand-up drag queens with many years’ experience bringing adult humour, glitter, patter and song to venues in Brighton and further afield.

Hey Davina, what have you been up to?
“I’ve basically been cleaning everything so it can sparkle lol. I usually have a very talkative cleaner but she’s obviously not doing her thing at the moment. I’ve been busy sorting some junk drawers out, rearranging cupboards and storage - I have 104 drag outfits, yep 104, it’s amazing the stuff you collect over the years. I’m thinking of having a ‘frock sale’ when all this is over... and when it is we can organise some big, big cabaret days in the venues all over town.”

Have you been doing much online?
“I was a bit late to the party, but most entertainers are going to have to find new ways of working for at least six months... I’ve sent 20% of what I receive through PayPal to the Brighton Rainbow Fund. Tune into my Facebook page ‘David Pollikett’ at 7pm on Thursdays... I’m thinking of doing it twice a week though, what do you think?"

What do you miss the most while in lockdown?
“More than ever we need our pubs and clubs and I know the LGBTQ+ scene won’t let us down, the gays always instinctively rally round in troubled times. I’ve missed the gossip, the bitching, the hugging and the laughs. We know how to have a good time and the scene feeds me, it renews me and keeps me insanely sane. Brighton’s scene is the best in the world, I truly believe that. Until we all meet again, we need to keep our knobs clean, our knockers polished, and of course our laughter going... it’s what we do.”

We’re going to really miss Brighton & Hove Pride...
“It’s such a shame. We’ll have to get together and organise each bar doing mini Pride days, or something similar... As times are tough, so only if you can, why not donate your Pride ticket money to the local charities that really need your help at this time? Further details - www.brighton-pride.org. Let’s lead the way, if you can afford it.”

Any words of wisdom to help us through?
“I hate to say it, but stay safe, stay indoors and wash your hands.”

FOLLOW
David Pollikett

MISS TISH EVE

Miss Tish Ewe is a gin-drinking, man-eating, international drag superstar. Affectionately known as the Bitch with the Itch, she’s an endearing ‘lady’ with a penchant for men with big pension pots and packages. What’s she been up to and what’s caught her beady eye?

What have you been up to?
“I’ve been keeping busy. My pub has been keeping things ticking over my doing alcohol deliveries and selling boozy cheesecakes. So, every day I usually end up covered in white creamy stuff.”

Heaven. What have you been up to online?
“I’m doing a weekly Wednesday evening show and I’ve been part of a drag choir put together by Miss Crystal. We released a cover of You Raise Me Up as a thank you to the NHS and key workers.”

How’s it gone down?
“I’m totally overwhelmed at the numbers watching and sending messages and comments. I’ve got a very loyal fanbase who tune in every week and just say the nicest of things. Hearing that I have brightened up their day makes it all worthwhile.”

Must be odd performing to a cam...
“The first one was the hardest without a doubt. You get to the end of a number and there’s no applause. It’s so strange as you have got nothing to bounce off. You also have to get used to the delay in their responses to what you do as you’re 20 seconds ahead of what people see and react to.”

Our drag girls and DJs have been very busy bees.
“Lots of performers are doing similar things. I’ve watched lots of them. Jade Chamberlain, the Kylie tributes, live videos have been sensational, Mrs Moore’s Under The Kimono has been hilarious and Lady Imelda has been very entertaining - from her cold caller live videos, to cooking in heels and of course her absolutely gorgeous full performances. I’m very pleased to call her my drag mama.”

Any tips to keep us sane during lockdown?
“Watch me on a Wednesday at 6.45pm on Facebook @misstishewe? Shameless plug. Trying to be creative is the best thing to do, keep the mind active... just don’t cut your own hair like my niece.”

What are your plans for when this is all over?
“A haircut and a pint in my nearest pub as they need our support. I think it will be a little while until our industry recovers.”

What do you miss most?
“Chatting away with the customers in the pub and being busy. I’m not used to doing very little all day.”

We’re going to really miss Brighton & Hove Pride...
“I’m gutted, not only for Brighton but all the Prides around the country. So much work and planning and finance goes into these events. Not to mention the financial boost to the scene.”

Any words of wisdom to keep us going?
“Don’t feel that you are alone. Reach out online. Just remember short-term inconvenience for long-term gain. Stay safe and we will all see each other soon.”

FOLLOW
misstishewe
Cut Out & Keep Sally Vates are taking the world by storm…

“Feedback has been great, my handy hints have caught on. I do love it when people post what they’ve done, and find the humour in it. My craft print-out downloads are being well received, like the Put Some Clothes On Sally Vate pone, which has reached as far as Brisbane in Australia. And I’m very grateful to those that have donated to Buy a Drink for Sally... For those who’re self employed it’s a very difficult time, and until we find what we can receive from the government it’s a very penny pinching time indeed, so thank you.”

Hey Sally, been up to much?

“I haven’t been performing online. I’ve tried to find the silver lining and I class the first couple of weeks as the holiday that I never get. If you’re old enough to remember To The Manor Born starring Penelope Keith, there’s an episode where she pretends to go on holiday, but in fact she’s in her sitting room on a sun lounger with a record player with a recording of teach yourself Spanish, it’s been like that.”

Living the dream...

“I’m very lucky that I like my own company, so isolation isn’t quite getting to me at present. I can always find things to keep me occupied. I’m ace at procrastinating, and anything crafty is the perfect way, so I’ve been doing little things and posting them on my Facebook page and website for people to download and print, like a dress-up Sally you can colour in and cut out. There’s lots of other games for all ages and families in lockdown.”

What are your plans for when this is all over?

“Shaving. It’s the longest I’ve had a beard. I normally only let it grow when I go away to family Panto, and that’s only just two weeks. Can’t wait to get back on a stage and see everyone. But hopefully keep the exercising up as I’ve never walked so much, and I really enjoy it. I’ve also noticed how easy it is to walk to anywhere in Brighton and I’ve discovered parts around in my neighbourhood that I never knew existed and some lovely independent shops. When it’s all over go and have a look inside and support local businesses.”

Any words of wisdom to get us through?

“The more we stick to keeping our distance, as well as the rest of the guidelines, the quicker we can have a good old knees up and a laugh.”

FOLLOW

@SallyVate www.sallyvate.com
Over the past 14 years, singer-songwriter Osaro has performed at an array of LGBTQ+ events lighting up the seaside and further afield with his wonderful generosity of spirit and lust for life. Here this colourful character shares how he’s been spending his time in lockdown and tells us about his new song, *Think of You*, which is written to help us all appreciate the moment and what we have.

**Hey Osaro, tell us about yourself...**

“Music has always been a passion, as a child I said to myself, ‘One day I’ll write my own songs, perform them and release them’. I’ve always felt that part of my essence is to represent diversity, fight for equality and hopefully inspire others. This vision has been achieved partly through my music. A catalyst that helped me focus on realising my dreams was my near-death experience due to contracting meningitis in my late 20s. It took me over a year to recover... I realised then that my life was not a dress rehearsal. From that point I didn’t have a song out or know anyone I could network with to help me get that far. I decided to do the online release but postponed the club event launch night with Kinky Dangerous to... who knows when? If I had time to respond to individual messages I might have sent thank you emails to people who stream live sets to include my music. I’ve also had time to embrace technology and with *Think of You* I’ve linked up online with DJs who stream live sets to include my music. I’ve done several music magazine online interviews as well as being interviewed live on Instagram chatting with participants directly. I’ve also had time to respond to individual messages from all over about my new single, which has now charted on three Spotify playlists.

“I’ve had time to embrace technology and with *Think of You* I’ve linked up online with DJs who stream live sets to include my music. I’ve done several music magazine online interviews as well as being interviewed live on Instagram chatting with participants directly. I’ve also had time to respond to individual messages from all over about my new single, which has now charted on three Spotify playlists.

“I wrote the song in memory of a loved one who passed away at the prime of his life... I also wanted to appreciate the love I have for/in life today. I wanted my lyrics to convey that it’s important from time to time to stop and appreciate the moment and what we have.”

**What have you been up to in lockdown?**

“It took me a while to process the reality of what’s actually happening. I couldn’t quite believe it and still can’t to a certain extent. My mood has been up and down (not helped by the fact that close family members have lost loved ones as have several of my friends, I also know people that have sadly passed away).

“Prior to the lockdown, after several months in planning, I had a release scheduled for early April of *Think of You*. I struggled with guilt and feeling selfish about going ahead with it as we’re all going through horrific times. I decided to do the online release but postponed the club event launch night with Kinky Dangerous to... who knows when? If I can lift at least one person during these testing times then my job is done. I’ve received messages from all over the world thanking me for the song saying that listening to it has helped them cope with their isolation... I feel overjoyed and humbled.

“I’ve had time to embrace technology and with *Think of You* I’ve linked up online with DJs who stream live sets to include my music. I’ve done several music magazine online interviews as well as being interviewed live on Instagram chatting with participants directly. I’ve also had time to respond to individual messages from all over about my new single, which has now charted on three Spotify playlists.

“I wrote the song in memory of a loved one who passed away at the prime of his life... I also wanted to appreciate the love I have for/in life today. I wanted my lyrics to convey that it’s important from time to time to stop and appreciate the moment and what we have.”

Any tips to keep our readers busy?

“At first I thought, great! I’ll have time to get on with all of those tasks that I always put off. I had a huge pile of loose socks that needed matching... It took me over 45mins to pair most of them up (was so bored), I admit I did get a sense of achievement and satisfaction but I’m finding it hard to motivate myself to do the other chores on my list. I’ve just created a weekly timetable with fixed times for exercise, supper, reading, TV – you get the picture. I needed a sense of routine before I completely lost the plot. I enjoy my daily cycle, catching up on Netflix (*Pose*, *Tiger King*, *RuPaul*, *Monty Don: French/Italian Gardens*) and reading books that I got for Christmas (*Becoming Michele Obama*).

“Socially I’ve been FaceTiming, Zooming and House Partying. Recently I attended an online clubbing event via Zoom, I spent ages deciding what to wear and even which aftershave to put on! I suddenly burst out laughing as it was only going to be me dancing in my kitchen by myself. It was fun to wave at others dancing and listening to the same music. I went to bed exhausted and it felt that I’d had a good night out... or in.

“I guess during lockdown, use the time to learn a new skill or contact that person you always mean to but never get around to and have a good catch up.”

**What are your plans for when it’s over?**

“I’m really looking forward to seeing my friends and family whether it be for a walk, restaurant, cafe, pub, garden. I just want to give them a big hug and tell them that I love them and appreciate them for who they are. I think that I’ll be like a wild animal dancing when out in the clubs plus I am looking forward to performing.”

**Anything you miss?**

“Meeting up socially, my Sunday roast, travelling on trains and planes, going to the cinema and theatre, getting back home at 5am after a good night out... Shall I go on?”

**We’re going to really miss Brighton Pride...**

“The cancellation of Pride was inevitable and it was the right thing to do. My heart went out to the organisers as a huge amount of work and hours goes into orchestrating such a large event and to those that were planning to attend. I also thought about the Brighton Rainbow Fund, which Pride raises a lot of money for resulting in LGBTQ+ services to be sustained... I hope that they are able to survive. We as a community may need to create some fundraising events.”

**Any words of wisdom to get us through?**

“Try to be kind to yourself (easier said than done), keep in touch or check on friends, if you are feeling low reach out to somebody... You could, like me, learn to poach an egg!

“Love and best wishes sent your way, Osaro xxx”

**FOLLOW**

Osaro69
Hey Gabriella, what have you been up to?

“Hi everyone. I’ve been enjoying the garden when I can, cooking and watching Netflix. I’m a big film lover and love Masterchef, Dragons’ Den and American Idol so I’ve been catching up on those.”

How does performing on Facebook compare to working a crowd?

“It’s different but fun. I feel more nervous than at a normal gig as there’s no live PA system and no one to tell you if you’re good or not. So if you’re doing songs people don’t like you can lose them which you obviously don’t want as you want everyone to enjoy it. Once you get going it’s great fun and very interactive, you feel more relaxed you don’t have to wear heals or eyelashes which is always a bonus.”

Everyone’s doing live stuff on Facebook - have you seen much?

“I have seen a fair few people doing it; all of them are different and great, and I think it gives people something to do and feel like they are still doing what they love just in a different way.”

Any tips to keep us from climbing the walls during lockdown?

“If you have a garden, get out in it as much as possible. If not then go out for 10 mins a day even just for a walk around the block. Clean as much as you can. Look at what you want to achieve at home or work that you don’t normally have time for. Enjoy the peace, we don’t get it often. Call your family and friends, there’s no need to feel alone.”

Any plans for when it’s all over and what do you miss the most?

“Get back to live shows, see my family and friends, have a BBQ and enjoy the garden. I miss being able to see my mum and dad and my family the most; we’re all very close so for me that’s difficult. Also I miss sitting outside somewhere with a coffee on the weekends.”

Any thoughts on Brighton & Hove Pride being cancelled?

“It’s a shame of course, but it’s the right decision for everyone’s safety. We’ll overcome this and one day it’ll be a distant memory and when we get there we’ll have a Pride bigger and better than ever before.”

Share some words of wisdom to get us through...

“Positivity, resilience, adaptation.”

Any words of wisdom to keep us going?

“Positivity, resilience, adaptation.”

Have you seen any other online stuff?

“Everyone’s doing live stuff on Facebook, all of them are different and great. I think it gives people something to do and feel like they are still doing what they love just in a different way.”

Any tips to keep us busy?

“Escape, create, laugh. Join one of my drop-in comedy writing workshops at Pen To Paper, Sydney Street Brighton (Sunday 6-8pm, £10). Get back to gigging in Brighton and London.”

What do you miss the most?

“The buzz of London. Swimming. Physical contact/hugs.”

Any words of wisdom to keep us going?

“Positivity, resilience, adaptation.”

Hey Annabelszki, what have you been up to?

“I’ve set up Pick n Mix: Mixed Bill Cabaret, which is streamed live on Zoom. I host and book up to six acts, using a variety show approach. The first two shows included drag kings, comedians, character acts, musicians, spoken word and storytelling. For more info visit my website and email me if you’re a performer and interested in taking part.”

How did the first one go down?

“Our first show had an audience of 39 - way more that you’d get on a Tuesday night in Brighton. The crowd were fantastic at interacting with the performers, using less traditional methods...”

How does it compare with stage work?

“People arriving into the Zoom ‘room’ is interesting; you watch as a name then an image then audio appears. People unfamiliar with Zoom need to be shown the basics, so they feel comfortable. We mute the audience to prevent the audio stream being diverted from the performer. The audience communicates using the chat box and thumbs up/applause emoji. Real-time applause is given at the end of each set by unmuting the audience. As host, I can ask the audience to respond to my questions by typing in their name box which can be quite entertaining, depending on the subject. There’s a time-lag in a live stream so I have to pause after delivering a punchline until I see the audience’s faces smile/react, before moving on to the next line.”

Have you seen any other online stuff?

“Adam Allis runs Boi Box Drag King Cabaret online and Leaf Plant (local performance artist) hosts Virtually Funny on Saturdays at 8pm. Comedians live-stream five minute sets using Discord to film and Twitch to stream. Audiences watch live and interact via the chat box.”

Any tips to keep us busy?

“Escape, create, laugh. Join one of my drop-in comedy writing workshops every Monday and Thursday at 7pm. Learn to write short-form comedy, ideal for someone working towards their first five-minute set. £10 one hour. Details are on my website.”

What are your plans for when this is all over?

“Finish writing my solo show, Blood, Glorious Blood for the rescheduled Brighton Fringe Festival in October. Run drop-in comedy writing workshops at Pen To Paper, Sydney Street Brighton (Sunday 6-8pm, £10). Get back to gigging in Brighton and London.”

Any words of wisdom to keep us going?

“Positivity, resilience, adaptation.”
FUCHSIA VON STEEL

Hey Fuchsia, tell us a bit about yourself...
“I take inspiration from all over the place really, from golden era Hollywood to bad horror movies, to urban legends. In my shows you can expect to see anything from burlesque to sideshow carnival stunts. I love pulling out something unexpected.”

What have you been up to?
“As well as using this time to make new looks, I’m doing a weekly story time on Friday on Twitch @fuchsiavonsteel and we just did the first online version of my monthly drag review Sleep Paralysis on Instagram @sleepparalysisbrighton and I’m looking forward to the next one.”

How’s it gone down?
“Really encouraging actually. Funnily enough, I had a larger audience on Instagram than the capacity for my regular shows.”

How does it compare with stage stuff?
“It was very nervous to begin with in all honesty, as I thrive on audience interaction, but we all ended up having a lovely time. It’s amazing to have people watching who aren’t usually able to see my shows, whether that be because of distance or accessibly issues. I had people tuning in all the way from New Zealand.”

Seen anything else online?
“There’s just so much material online now. From Queer Houseparty to Joe Black doing shows from their living room to Digital Drag, the list is endless. It’s a really interesting time for queer art right now.”

Any tips to keep us from losing our minds during lockdown?
“I’ve been using this time to finish all those projects that I started and left months and years ago. For anyone watching free online content, please tip your performers if you can afford it, even a couple of quid can provide a little relief and distraction in these circumstances.”

What’s the response been like?
“Lovely and supportive. I’m so pleased that I, like other performers, can provide a little relief and distraction in these circumstances.”

Any words of wisdom to keep our readers busy?
“Do some DIY, stay in contact with people, exercise, learn a new skill.”

What are your plans for when this is all over?
“I’m looking forward to seeing everyone again in person and getting back on the road to entertain audiences.”

What do you miss the most?
“Not seeing everyone. Many of us are social butterflies so not having social interaction is hard and of course I miss performing full time.”

What’s your plan for when this is all over?
“Do some DIY, stay in contact with people, exercise, learn a new skill.”

How’s your new weekly Drag Review?
“Lovely and supportive. I’m so pleased that I, like other performers, can provide a little relief and distraction in these circumstances.”

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Any words of wisdom to keep us through?
“Stay safe, stay strong, stay home, wash your hands and we will get through this, I’m also here for anyone if they need to talk/vent. Also, please support all venues when this is over.”

FOLLOW
@Fuchsiavonsteel
@sleepparalysisbrighton

STEPHANIE VON CLITZ

Stephanie Von Clitz, the Dorset tart with a heart, brings a whole lot of love to the Brighton scene, and beyond. What’s the Queen of Clean got up her sleeve to keep you entertained in these uncertain times?

Hi Stephanie, what have you been up to?
“Hi my love. So I’ve turned into a domestic goddess and also keep busy staying in touch with friends and family. I’m doing an online show from home as I live above a venue, which is on Facebook every Sunday at 6pm, called Stephanie Von Clitz’s Sunday Roast.”

What’s your plan for when this is all over?
“I’m looking forward to seeing everyone again in person and getting back on the road to entertain audiences.”

What do you miss the most?
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FOLLOW
@StephanieVonClitz
MISS PENNY

Lover of vodka and gorgor of Greggs, Miss Penny’s shows are filled to the brim with quick wit, amazing live vocals, class, comedy patter and audience participation... Here’s her plans for when lockdown is over and what she’s been doing to keep her hands and liver busy...

Hey Penny, what have you been up to?
“Well I’ve been relegated to a house in a small province of Bearwood, missing the chateau I usually reside in, so I’ve had to go back to my humble roots and cook and clean, even the toilet... I’ve done some live feeds for the public’s visual experience - every Wednesday for Cards & Cabaret and every Saturday for Miss Penny’s Penytentiary.”

What’s the response been like?
“Response has been amazing. Regular faces and some new, friends I haven’t seen or spoken to in a while. I’ve tried to make most of it as interactive as possible but the feeds move so quick I don’t get chance to chat or mention everyone.”

How does it compare with stage work?
“It’s very strange and nowhere near as good as being on the stage in front of a live audience. There’s obviously no round of applause (but some are used to that), so that can be weird. No titters, giggles or the muttering as someone orders drinks etc... but it’s about making use of what you have. So I say to use the heart button to applaud.

Also there tend to be delays or distortion occasionally but that is due to so many using the cyberspace. I do miss that ‘one’ you get in a crowd who tries to butt in or shout something they deem ‘witty’, gives the chance to throw some shade.”

Everyone’s been busy online...
“OMG there’s loads. Us queens in the Midlands have set up our page, Midlands Drag TV Live (have a gander), with a weekly news sheet of who is on at what time and what day. We try not to clash with each other so we all get a slice of the pie, so to speak. There are the queens in Cardiff, London, Manchester, Liverpool, Brighton and all over doing live shows online so go have a moomch.”

Any tips to keep us busy?
“Pornhub, Cam4 to name a few... otherwise why not decorate, empty those cupboards you’ve been putting off for years? Do tax returns, take up a hobby, learn a language or practice making cocktails (excuse to have a bevy), tackle that garden but most importantly support your queens on their live feeds hehehe.”

What are your plans for when this is all over?
“To hold a charity event for the NHS and food bank (already sorted half of it) and then get back to the grind of whoring and touring the length and breadth of the UK and Europe. I love my work, it keeps me sane. I think that’s what most of us want.”

What do you miss the most?
“Social interaction, usually in a darkened room or one of those heath spas. I think we take each other for granted and this kind of situation makes you rethink and re-evaluate past arguments, grudges and the like. I miss the buzz of a bar, dining out at The Ritz...”

Any words of wisdom to keep us going?
“Try not to live in fear. Stay as sane and as active as you can to keep yourself occupied. Mental health will be hit hard with this. Be patient with people you live with, remember to talk if there is a problem. But stay strong and united. We will get through this.”

How are you keeping fit?
“Gardening is my exercise. I love it. I’m lucky enough to have an allotment so I’ve spent quite a bit of time tending my seedlings. I don’t think there’s a single weed left to pull, it’s looking pristine.”

Any tips to keep us busy while in lockdown?

What are your plans for when this is all over?
“I’m not making any plans. I’m taking one day at a time.”

Any words of wisdom to keep us going?
“Don’t make any plans. Take one day at a time.”

Follow
Miss Penny

BOOGALOO STU

Fuelled by a boundless enthusiasm for popular music, Boogaloo Stu lives in world that owes as much to obscure psychedelic cinema of 1960s Paris as to end-of-the-pier bawdiness and slapstick. What has this colourful, quiffy character been up to while in lockdown?

Hey Stu, how’s it going?
“I’m very well, thank you.”

Been up to much online?
“Yes. I’ve been doing a pub quiz with Secret London for the past few weeks and I’ve also been asked to host a bingo and comedy event with Laine Brew Co, which is launching soon.”

How’s it been going down?
“It’s been a delight. I wasn’t sure if I’d enjoy performing online, but I’m fully embracing my digital audience. I hope that the quiz brings a little light relief to the monotony of lockdown, as well as keeping the grey matter ticking over.”

How is it compared to performing in person?
“Audience interaction is at the heart of all my performances, so I really miss having that physical connection with people. It’s been strange and I’m really not sure we’ll get back to where we were any time soon, so in the meantime make the most of what technology can offer and use it to stay in touch.”

How are you keeping fit?
“Patter and audience participation... Here’s what she’s been doing to keep her hands and liver busy...”

Follow
BoogalooStuOfficial
LAZY SUSAN

Brighton-based Lazy Susan loves a good turn! Singing anything from Bucks Fizz to Broadway, with a helping of warped sense of humour, Susan takes her audience on a magical journey that’s sure to have you all screaming ‘YOU STUPID B****!’

Hey Susan, tell us a bit about yourself...

“My name is Lazy Susan, taking audiences for a spin on my wheel of misfortune for the past 12 months across London and the South East.”

What have you been up to?

“As yet I haven’t performed online. I was fortunate to be furloughed from my day job and would encourage people to support full-time performers reliant on their online tips at this difficult time. I am planning to do a turn towards the end of lockdown to raise money for local LGBTQ+ charities. Expect new songs, new material and a new aesthetic that I’ve been working on in secret with my free time.”

We love watching our local queens tearing it up online...

“Of the performances I’ve watched it’s a far more personal experience. You feel a more direct connection with the act as you’re not just skimming for viewing position. However, it’s a little like watching a sitcom without the canned laughter! That being said, my partner and I have howled with laughter at some things we’ve seen (shout out to Cosmic’s makeup tutorial!). What’s really great about having online access to performers is that you’re no longer restricted by location. Queens you wait months to see locally are instantly available at the touch of a button. It’s great seeing everyone perform for their own pleasure and giving it their all!”

Any tips to keep us busy?

“Hobbies and a routine have been invaluable! Setting aside time each day to perfect something or try something new. I’ve learnt to sew in anticipation of spectacular weight gain or loss between now and the end of lockdown (delete as appropriate on sight after this is over).”

Thoughts about Brighton & Hove Pride being postponed?

“It’s a terrible shame. I’m aware of how reliant local LGBTQ+ venues and businesses are on the financial boost - but clearly it’s necessary. I’m sure at the first opportunity we’ll see our local bars spring back to life, hopefully busier than ever! Also, I was never much of a Mariah fan…”

What are your plans for when this is all over?

“I’m actually part way through competing in Portsmouth Drag Race which is on hold now. I’ve a few tricks up my sleeve for the final which should hopefully bring a win my way. Huge thanks to Cherry Liquor and the Hampshire Boulevard team for putting things on hold rather than cancelling altogether. And I’ll continue to push to make the dream of quitting my day job and pursuing drag full time a reality.”

Any words of wisdom to keep us going?

“You are not hungry, you are bored - put down the fork!; there’s no excuse for having a floodrobe; don’t get sucked into how depressing the news is - stop scrolling through your phone, take a break; do NOT dye your hair; do NOT cut your hair; video chats are a blessing - I’ve been in touch with friends and family I’d drifted apart from years ago.

MORE INFO

@LazySusanDQ

MAX LEGROOM

Max Legroom is the ultimate Drag King, award-nominated comic and trickster, bringing live vocals, comedy, lip-sync, utter chaos and mirth to Brighton and further afield. Can this mischief maker help keep you from losing the plot during lockdown with their Not Another Drag Quiz on Facebook on the first Thursday of every month?

Hey Max, what have I been up to?

“Well, I’m attempting to knit a pair of mittens at the moment. Perfect weather for it. I’ve done a few live online performances here and there, as well as the first online version of my monthly pub quiz. I’m making pre-recorded online content too, so keep an eye out for that. The pre-recorded bits (mostly comedy shorts on Facebook and Tiktok) are going down well. I think people are just so bored. The shows are good too. I’ve hugely changed what I do in a live show though…”

What’s it like performing to cam?

“Well, to begin with I didn’t understand quite how different the whole vibe would be. I’m realising that I can’t just do what I was doing before ie I can’t just substitute an audience for a webcam. There’s strengths and limitations to this format. I’ve done a lot more comedy readings and games from the corner of my bedroom than I’d do live, as those are funnier on a web stream. I have a decent mic setup for live bits, but straightforward live lip-syncs aren’t for me right now.”

How are you keeping fit?

“Pre-lockdown I did aerial trapeze and pole dancing, and now I don’t. You could say I’m climbing the walls. I’ve taken up hula hooping and can almost do a few tricks without whacking myself in the face. I have ADHD and exercising is probably the only way to keep it at bay. It’s good too. I’ve hugely changed what I do in a live show though…”

Thoughts on Brighton & Hove Pride being postponed?

“Of the performances I’ve watched it’s a far more personal experience. You feel a more direct connection with the act as you’re not just skimming for viewing position. However, it’s a little like watching a sitcom without the canned laughter! That being said, my partner and I have howled with laughter at some things we’ve seen (shout out to Cosmic’s makeup tutorial!). What’s really great about having online access to performers is that you’re no longer restricted by location. Queens you wait months to see locally are instantly available at the touch of a button. It’s great seeing everyone perform for their own pleasure and giving it their all!”

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“It’s a terrible shame. I’m aware of how reliant local LGBTQ+ venues and businesses are on the financial boost - but clearly it’s necessary. I’m sure at the first opportunity we’ll see our local bars spring back to life, hopefully busier than ever! Also, I was never much of a Mariah fan…”

What are your plans for when this is all over?

“I’m absolutely no idea. Can’t even picture it right now. Probably waste fewer hours of my life in Pret than before?”

Any words of wisdom?

“We’re going through an extremely weird and traumatic event, all at the same time. Remind yourself that there’s no ‘normal’ way to feel right now.”

MORE INFO

Catch Max Legroom’s Not Another Drag Quiz on Facebook on Thursday, May 7 at 7.30pm, then first Thursday every month.

“I’ve taken up hula hooping and can almost do a few tricks without whacking myself in the face”

How are you keeping fit?

“Pre-lockdown I did aerial trapeze and pole dancing, and now I don’t. You could say I’m climbing the walls. I’ve taken up hula hooping and can almost do a few tricks without whacking myself in the face. I have ADHD and exercising is probably the only way to keep it at bay. It’s hard without the structure and accountability of the gym.”

Top tips to keep us busy during lockdown?

“Yes. Do you wear glasses? Try putting them in a new, obscure place hard without the structure and accountability of the gym.”

Thoughts about Brighton & Hove Pride being postponed?

“Of the performances I’ve watched it’s a far more personal experience. You feel a more direct connection with the act as you’re not just skimming for viewing position. However, it’s a little like watching a sitcom without the canned laughter! That being said, my partner and I have howled with laughter at some things we’ve seen (shout out to Cosmic’s makeup tutorial!). What’s really great about having online access to performers is that you’re no longer restricted by location. Queens you wait months to see locally are instantly available at the touch of a button. It’s great seeing everyone perform for their own pleasure and giving it their all!”

Any tips to keep us busy?

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“The atmosphere in that park is electric... Backstage, onstage, waiting for chips, everywhere... and that will happen again. We have to look forward to the times we can all celebrate together again.”

MARY MAC

Scottish drag queen Mary Mac flies the saltire round the UK and internationally with a show packed with hits, battered Mars bars and banter. What’s the Irn Bru & voddy swigging fox been up to?

Tell us about yourself and how you’ve been spending lockdown...

“I’m just a wee Scottish girl trying to entertain as many people as I can with laughs, songs and plenty of nonsense. I keep busy by writing for panto and other shows, and I do my Lockdown Live show from Lanzarote.”

What’s the response been like?

“Everyone is so, so wonderful, it’s nice that even though we’re so far apart we can still share a laugh and a bit of a party all together.”

How does it differ to performing to a crowd?

“It’s a completely different experience - I didn’t think I’d enjoy it but it’s fast and funny trying to keep up with comments and questions. I’ve learned a lot of new songs too, regular viewers of my live cabaret show will be thrilled when the scene returns.”

The drag queens have been busy bees online...

“Yes, lots of queens and performers are doing all sorts and it’s wonderful to see. You’ve got Miss Jason, Sandra, Myra and the odd special guest (when one of us isn’t available) doing the Power Of Four on Sundays and quizzes and bingos from Lola Lasagne, Miss Penny and Sheila Simmonds.”

Top tips to keep us from losing the plot?

“I love a good TV drama so I’ve been catching up on lots I’ve missed like The Nest and Liar. I find they help take your mind away from the real madness outside our doors right now.”

Any plans for when this is over?

“Get back to work. We’ll open Bar Soho in Lanzarote again as soon as we can and in the UK I’ll be back on the road with Everybody’s Talking About Jamie plus my shows on the cabaret scene too.”

What do you miss the most?

“I miss my family, both birth and chosen, and the interaction with all the fabulous people I know.”

We’re going to miss Brighton & Hove Pride this year...

“Pride is incredible and always will be. The atmosphere in that park is electric the whole day. Backstage, onstage, waiting for chips, everywhere, there is love and happiness and that will happen again. We have to look forward to the times we can all celebrate together again.”

Any words of wisdom to keep us going?

“Get some fresh air when you can while staying socially distant, smile and I’ll see you at the bar when all this is over. Up yer kilts.”

FOLLOW

Mary Mac’s Lockdown Live show from Lanzarote every Sunday at 5.30pm @marymacofficial

LUCINDA LASHES

Lucinda Lashes, drag queen with the tongue of the devil and the voice of a fallen angel, is one of the south’s most outrageous drag acts, destroying the stages and abusing the punters of some of our top LGBTQ+ venues. She’s been hitting the bottle, and becoming a social media influencer (ha.) during lockdown...

Hey Lucinda, what have you been up to?

“I’ve been busy as a bee. Spring cleaning the caravan top to bottom, inside and out. Decorating two rooms, and still have more rooms to finish. Tending to the overgrown bushes in the garden. Jet washing the moss off my cat flap. I do shows twice a week on Tuesdays and Saturdays at 7.30pm on Facebook. I haven’t really stopped.”

How are you finding performing online?

“Online shows are much harder. There isn’t an audience and I feed off crowds at work. It’s been extremely successful though, and I now have 11 friends on Facebook, lol. People are donating generously to my Go Fund Me, so I thank you all for all your support.”

Does it differ much from performing to a sea of faces?

“The main difference is the vocal and sound of a crowd. You can’t feed off people from a camera. People do emoji clap and fill my feed with hearts.”

The drag queens have been busy online...

“There are lots of performers doing regular shows. I see quite a few I know and some I don’t know online when I have a spare minute.”

Any tips to keep us sane/busy during lockdown?

“We’re all in the same boat unfortunately. I’m not fazed though. We all need to do what we can to get through this awful period. For me, distraction keeps me sane. Even though we’re all at home, we can do something if we look for it. You don’t need to sit around in your own thoughts worrying yourself to death. Do things you always put off. By the time you think you’ve finished you’ll have to start again. Thank god for technology keeping us only a screen away from everyone we love. Catch up with people who’ve fallen behind on your priority spectrum. I’m lucky to have lots to do. Children of my own to chat to, as well as my family.”

What are your plans for when this is over?

“My god, when this is over I want to get straight back to work. I want as many vodka and sambucca shots as I can shove down my clacker. I’m always busy so I’d like to get back to looking forward to my day off. What I miss the most at the moment is the noise. I’m always surrounded by noise. There’s not so much of it at the moment. Only when I’m doing a show in my own front room.”

And any words of wisdom?

“For anyone out there looking for ways to cope: stay connected as much as you can. Be sensible, laugh, joke, cry. Keep it real, there will be a light at the end of the tunnel and boy when we get to that it’s gonna be one f*****g piss up.”

FOLLOW

Lucinda Lashes
Toby Lawrence has been twiddling knobs as a superstar DJ on the Brighton, London and south coast LGBTQ+ scenes since 2014. He chats about what he’s been up to online and what the future holds.

Hey Toby, how’s it going?
All good thank you. Weird times, right?

You’ve been quite the busy bee online...
“For sure. It’s been a weird time and us DJs have had to adapt pretty quickly. The day lockdown was announced I did a 24-hour DJ set, live streamed on Facebook to raise money for the Music Venues Trust who support grassroots music venues across the UK.

“I’ve also been working with G-A-Y and Heaven in London putting together virtual club nights and DJ sets for them. I’ve also been overseeing and putting together a whole host of events for Revenge including The Big Queer Quiz with Rob From Finance, virtual club nights with all of our resident DJs and a new Virtual Drag Festival showing off some of the best drag talent the UK has to offer.”

Aside from music, how do you keep busy?
“Honestly, apart from music and the other projects, not a whole lot. I’ve binge watched more series on Netflix than I’d like to admit, and probably wasted a week tending to my village on Animal Crossing. I’m running my own events, a disco day-party at Hampshire Boulevard in Portsmouth, aptly titled Disco Titz had to be postponed so I’m looking at alternative dates - watch this space.”

What does the future hold?
“I’m working on a lot of new music with Brighton-based musicians which I hope to release towards the end of the year. I’ve also got a couple of collaborations lined up with some big name DJs which I’m very excited about.”

Any thoughts on Brighton & Hove Pride?
“It’s obviously incredibly sad, especially as we know how much work goes into putting on such a huge event, but it’s undoubtedly the right decision and I have to take my hat off to the Pride team - It can’t have been an easy decision to make and they showed great care for the wider community making that decision. We’ll just have to make up for it next year.”

Do you reckon the scene will bounce back bigger and better?
“I think people are going to appreciate queer venues being there more than ever. I really hope that nobody will take their local gay pub or club for granted again.”

What do you miss the most?
“My job has always been a big part of my social life so I’m really missing seeing all the regulars at the club, whether that’s here or in London. Hopefully it won’t be too long before we can have a bev and a massive catch up.”

Plans for when this is all over?
“I’m going straight back to work and throwing myself straight in at the deep end. Lockdown has given me some awesome ideas for events and parties so I can’t wait to get to work on making those a reality.”

Words of wisdom to keep us going?
“Rather than social distancing, we should call it ‘physical distancing’. Human beings are social creatures by nature, and we should reach out to one another more than ever. Check on your friends and your family. We all know how resilient and strong the LGBTQ+ community is and we’ll get through this together and come out stronger on the other side. Also, Stay Home, Protect the NHS and Save Lives (because we haven’t heard that enough already).”

Top 5 tunes to put a smile on your face
- The Shapeshifters Second Chance
- Brokeneurs Keep Control
- Phyllis Hyman You Know How To Love Me (Dimitri From Paris remix)
- Georgio Moroder & Philip Oakey Together In Electric Dreams
- Adelphi Music Factory Uprising (I Can’t Wait)

FOLLOW
- DJ Toby Lawrence  @djtobylawrence
NICK FORD

Hey Nick, tell us a bit about yourself.

“I’m a seventh-generation Brightonian and a third-generation photographer, but the first to have the family name on a door! I love travel, I’ve worked at sea as a photographer on cruise ships for years, and I opened my own studio on Oxford Street in Brighton in 2013. I’ve no dependents, apart from my house plants, and I love singing with Brighton Gay Men’s Chorus.”

Have you adjusted to working from home?

“It’s been quite difficult being a freelance photographer and working from home. Observing the lockdown restrictions, closing the door on the studio and relocating to the flat, which I’m rarely at due to the hours and jobs that I do, I’ve been feeling quite isolated at home. With the ‘technical teething’ issues that come with relocating to home, and all the admin that has surrounded the change, it’s been quite stressful to be honest.

“My normal work covers all aspects of life, portraits and passport photos, which requires me to be in quite close proximity to clients. I also do lots of weddings and events and other shoots which have had to be postponed due to the safety precautions. One of the last shoots I did before the lockdown was announced was the cover shoot of Karl for this month’s edition of Gscene. It was carefully arranged with the Chesterfield between us at all times; my ‘socially distanced sofa’ came in quite handy! The business was growing up until this point and my newly appointed studio assistant Michael has had to be furloughed, but it has made a very difficult situation slightly better knowing that his job is secure.”

What’s been the impact to your business?

“Temporarily closing the door on my studio. Not being able to interact with people and be hands-on doing things. I’ve been a freelance photographer for 13 years - it’s a very sociable job which I love.”

What skills can you share from home that people may be interested in?

“I can do socially distanced shoots such as product shoots and offer video calls to discuss plans post-lockdown. I’m very dependent on travel, events, and family portraits, so it’s a good opportunity to prepare myself to hit the ground running. I’m also available for post-production work and online tutorials.

“I’ve been preparing for the Artists’ Open Houses and Brighton Photo Fringe, both key events in our city’s diary which have had to be postponed; I’ve been sharing images taken through the duration of the lockdown on social media as I know some folk only have a small patch of blue to look at; so I’m happy to share something positive about our city with one and all. Prints will be available of the ‘postcards’ I’ve been sharing of the views from the flat.”

Tips to keep us from climbing the walls?

“Try to stay busy and focused on something. It’s great to have a bit of a rest but the sense of accomplishment you get from completing those ‘rainy day’ tasks is always worthwhile! Learn something new, do something creative, and catch up on sleep if you can!”

What are your plans for when it’s all over?

“I cannot wait to see my family and friends! All the little social interactions that we take for granted, it’ll be fantastic to be able to hug my folks, family and friends. Workwise I’m going to be very busy shooting events that have had to be postponed. I’ll also be adapting to the new norm – I think a surge of head shots will be taken for people’s online profiles as we have now realised how vital it is to have a good online presence.”

What do you miss the most?

“Seeing people, in real life. Singing with the Brighton Gay Men’s Chorus. The substitutes are merely that, you can’t beat the real thing.”

Any thoughts on Brighton & Hove Pride?

“I’m sad but relieved that it’s been postponed. I think going from solitary isolation to thousands upon thousands of people descending on Brighton within such a short period of time would be far too risky and overwhelming for most. It’ll give the city a chance to recover and all of us a chance to catch up on all the postponed events, including the memorial services that will be held for those who weren’t given the chance to be seen off properly during this time.

“Maybe a local event on the day of Brighton & Hove Pride would be something to look forward to? I understand that the charities and businesses will suffer financially but this is across the board, hopefully it will help focus and allow for an even bigger and better celebration next year!”

Any words of wisdom to keep us going?

Call upon the LGBTQ+ services that we support as a community if you need them, I’m especially thinking of those who may not have a large social circle. Stay strong and remember to reach out to friends and loved ones, we’re all going through this together even if it doesn’t feel like it sometimes.”

FOLLOW
@nickfordphotography
www.nickfordphotography.co.uk

Brighton Gay Men’s Chorus. The substitutes are merely that, you can’t beat the real thing.”
Many creative artists, including classical musicians and ensembles, have taken to social media offering all kinds of streamed performances. Of course the larger ensembles, such as opera houses and orchestras (the Metropolitan Opera, Royal Opera House and the Berlin Philharmonic to name just a few), are better placed to weather the sudden loss in revenues. But it is the individual musicians and small ensembles, mostly working freelance, who will have lost out the most, with concerts and potential recording sessions all cancelled almost instantly, often with no prospect of being rescheduled.

So I first thought I’d list lots of online opportunities and free concert and opera streaming services – but in fact, you can find those pretty easily anyway. Better, think about how you might support musicians over the coming months if you can. I know this is affecting everyone in one way another, so musicians are not unique – and a freelance plumber or decorator can’t suddenly ‘stream’ their services online. But if you value music, performance and live arts in your life (and the heart and soul of any community), you can put this into practice.

So I should now be previewing all the exciting upcoming classical music concerts and performances in the Brighton Festival and Fringe, but sadly that’s not to be. Other casualties include the Lewes Chamber Music Festival and the Lewes Festival of Song, scheduled for June and July respectively, and Glyndebourne has cancelled all performances in this year’s festival until at least July.

Iruzun and the quartet play with rich-toned energy. There is a distinctive sound too, with dark harmonies contrasting with rhapsodic writing for the piano. Iruzun plays with suitable passion and the strings match with rich-toned energy.

Henrique Oswald left Brazil to study in Italy, and stayed there for 30 years, but returned to teach in Brazil for the rest of his life. His Piano Quintet, from 1895, has a mixture of European influences, with Brahms again showing through, as well as a more French tinge, reminiscent of Fauré. Again, Iruzun and the quartet play with passion, but also bring out the more inward mood of this contrasting work.

So sometimes the guitar (here played by Sam Brown) has the folk tune, sometimes it accompanies and in the fifth of the six movements, Under the Stars, it is totally unaccompanied. This gives Brown the chance to show a great range of the instrument’s abilities, and he is particularly impressive in that solo movement, with its harmonics and subtle strumming effects. Folksong appears again in the Mandalin Concerto, this time an Irish folk song, My Singing Bird, and evocations of bird song are abundant here, as well as shimmering strings and dark whole tone scales.

1. Purchase physical music – CDs, vinyl – from musicians, perhaps favouring the lesser known. Streaming and to a certain extent downloads bring in some income, but it’s slow and often pretty minimal – direct online sales will get income to musicians pretty much straight away, which is what’s needed right now.

2. Have tickets for a concert that’s been cancelled? Hang on to them if there’s a rescheduled date, or if you can afford to, consider the money as a donation – especially if the musician has offered up any free performances online.

3. If you are listening to online concerts or performances, consider donating what you might have paid for a ticket – most streaming performances will have a link to do this.


Hopefully, with support from those of us that can, when all this is over we will still have a strong and vibrant creative economy, and access to the wealth of music and performance that perhaps we have taken for granted before now. And if you’ve been prompted to take up one of my suggestions, I’d love to hear from you. Perhaps you’ve bought some music you might not have otherwise, or made a donation for an online performance you have enjoyed – let me know via my contact details below.

Reviews, comments and events:

- nicks-classical-notes.blogspot.co.uk
- @nickb86uk
- nbclassical@hotmail.co.uk

Amy Beach’s Piano Quintet dates from 1908, and is dramatic and richly Romantic. There is a clear debt to Brahms, and she even quotes from the finale of his Piano Quintet in the first movement. But there is a distinctive sound too, with dark harmonies contrasting with rhapsodic writing for the piano. Iruzun plays with suitable passion and the strings match with rich-toned energy.

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Poema XI, by contemporary Brazilian composer Marcos Nobre follows, with its sombre swirling melody performed with elegant warmth. Iruzun is joined by the quartet’s lead violinist, Roger Coull for Amy Beach’s Romance For Violin And Piano, Op. 23 – a beautifully heartfelt miniature, with a touching simplicity, concluding this highly enjoyable programme.

BARRY MILLS Elan Valley (Claudio CG6040-2). Brighton-based composer Barry Mills (b.1949) has recorded several CDs of his music, and this one is entitled Elan Valley, after the orchestral work that opens it. This is an atmospheric, pastoral evocation of the Welsh landscape, drawing on a Welsh folksong at its heart. The orchestration is highly effective, with shimmering, watery strings and gentle harp and woodwind writing. The orchestra, the Moravian Philharmonic Orchestra under Petr Vronsky, bring out the detail with great warmth here, and in the other orchestral work, Evening Rain – Sunset, composed for the Sussex Symphony Orchestra’s 20th anniversary in 2013.

There are three concerts on this disc, one for mandolin, one for guitar and one for mandolin and guitar together. Mills obviously has an affinity for both instruments, and he makes good use of their melodic, rhythmic and subtle textural qualities.

The double concerto is performed by Daniel Ahlert (mandolin) and Brigit Schwab (guitar), and in its four movements, Mills contrasts the tightness of touch of the soloists with relatively simple orchestral textures.

The Guitar Concerto, titled The Travels of Turlough O’Carolan, places Mills’ arrangements of folk melodies by Turlough O’Carolan (1670-1738) alongside his own musical evocations of wind, sea, rivers, mountains and night.

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ALL THAT JAZZ
BY SIMON ADAMS

REVIEWS

1. CHRISTIAN McBRIDE The Movement Revisited: A Musical Portrait of Four Icons (Mack Avenue). Bass player Christian McBride originally intended to write a musical portrait of the civil rights movement, without fully understanding what that complex movement was all about. Luckily, he changed his approach, and finally put together a musical portrait of four personal icons: Rosa Parks, Malcolm X, Muhammad Ali, and Martin Luther King, with an additional movement dedicated to Barack Obama after his election as America’s first black president in 2008. Four narrators speak the words of the icons, an 18-piece big band and 10-strong choir provide the musical accompaniment and interludes. This is the sort of work one should like and appreciate, given its politics, but while inspired by the words I found the movement musically uneven, the tribute to Martin Luther King in particular too martial, too much like a film soundtrack. Others will disagree, and when moved by the words will also enjoy the fine big-band swing and impassioned jazz.

2. JOSHUA REDMAN & BROOKLYN RIDER Sun On Sand (Nonesuch). Combinations of jazz trios and string quartets don’t usually work, for why should different musical traditions bother that much with each other? But in this case, the meeting is magical. The eight compositions on this set are drawn from Aspects of Darkness and Light, a suite composed by New Yorker Patrick Zimmerli, and all represent different expressions of light. The Brooklyn Rider quartet provides the strings, saxophonist Joshua Redman and his trio the jazz. The result is a surprisingly joyful, often ebullient set, which swings like hell.

3. MAYTE ALGUACIL & MICHAEL KANAN Something I Dreamed Last Night (Fresh Sound New Talent). Spanish singer Mayte Alguacil and American pianist Michael Kanan have recorded one set together before now, in 2015, and return with more of the largo id same, concentrating on jazz standards and the popular song. Drummer Jordi Rossí remarks that “Mike and Mayte have no interest in over-dramatic expression, extravaganza, ready-made emotion or artifice of any kind.” Neither are they interested in anything faster than a gentle amble, as none of the 13 tracks ever picks up its feet and even pretends to dance. Every Time We Say Goodbye is so slow it almost grinds to a halt, Only The Lonely is positively lethargic, while the album’s stand-out track – In The Wee Small Hours – is stripped down to bare vocals and single-note piano support. But if the two don’t go for drama, they are interested in exploring the emotions of each song. Alguacil inhabiting the lyrics as if she wrote them all, Kanan’s sensitive, withdrawn accompaniment – he only takes brief solos – providing the melodic backdrop with the minimum of harmonic variety. It’s all very simple but heartfelt, and all the more effective for that.

ART MATTERS
BY ENZO MARRA

This month, with our shared inside time experience which has closed down the live art experience, I’ll concentrate on the virtual experience of the art space, presented by galleries both traditional and modern. The action of viewing artworks even at that distance hopefully being able to invigorate, educate or challenge you from your lived space.

COURTAULD GALLERY
www.courtauld.ac.uk/gallery/about/3d-gallery-virtual-tour

Beginning with the Courtauld Gallery, the virtual tour uses a new photographic technique to show the gallery and the works exhibited in exceptional close-up quality. You can roam through each room as it was before it temporarily closed in September 2018, and zoom in to look closely at masterpieces from their collection including Vincent Van Gogh’s Self-Portrait with Bandaged Ear and Édouard Manet’s A Bar at The Folies-Bergère, the applied individual brush strokes and the texture of the paint made visible as if you were peering in at them.

NATIONAL GALLERY
www.nationalgallery.org.uk/visiting/virtual-tours

Also opening it’s doors in a virtual manner, the National Gallery offers a tour where you can enjoy panoramic views of the gallery in collaboration with Google Street View, allowing you the opportunity to immerse yourself in Renaissance masterpieces from Northern Italy, the Netherlands and Germany, including works by Titian, Veronese and Holbein. They also provide a virtual reality tour of the Sainsbury Wing, the home to their world-class collection of Early Renaissance paintings, with over 270 paintings to browse within a 360 degree tour on your standard electronic devices. In addition there’s a virtual tour of 18 rooms originally instigated in 2011, which incorporates the experience of the gallery rooms and 300 paintings from their collection. The tour links directly to painting pages, which in turn offers the chance to learn more about each of the paintings.

HAUSER & WIRTH GALLERY
www.vip-hauserwirth.com

Courtesy of the Hauser & Wirth Gallery, there’s a selection of works by Louise Bourgeois who made drawing a daily ritual across her seven decade-long career. Something a bit rawer and more personal, this will be Saville Row-based Hauser & Wirth’s first online exhibition - a celebration of the French-American artists’ pieces in ink, watercolour and pencil. The gallery is also generously launching Dispatches, a new series of videos, events and features to keep connected with it’s artists in creative isolation.

ALEPH CONTEMPORARY

Finally I would like to finish on a solo show I had at the Aleph Contemporary in their viewing room. Deluge (Mar 1-15), which included works on paper and on canvas among the shown selection. The works spanning a number of years, showing the development and alteration that has occurred within my visual practise, in subject matter and in painterly approach.
Trans Love: An Anthology of Transgender and Non-Binary Voices, edited by Freiya Benson (Jessica Kingsley Publishers, £14.99). This is a pioneering anthology of transgender and non-binary voices writing on the theme of love, sharing thoughts, feelings and experiences of love in all its forms. The compendium spans familial, romantic, spiritual and self-love as well as friendships and ally love, to provide a broad and honest understanding of how trans people navigate love and relationships, and what love means to them. Recovering what love means to trans people, this book provokes conversations that are not reflected in what is presently written, moving the narrative around trans identities away from sensationalism. At once intimate and radical, and both humorous and poignant, this book is for anyone who has loved, who is in love, and who is looking for love. Presented with a picture of the person, commentary and information about where and when it was given. With engaging illustrations from Jack Holland, it’s a lovely object in itself and you can’t help but be inspired by these words, a call to action for all of us to continue to respond to these exceptional speeches. Assembled by trans activist Tea Uglow, with a foreword by Peter Tatchell, this anthology reminds us of the power of words when used to fire the imagination, reassure communities under pressure and drive us forward to create a better world for ourselves and those who come after us. These words dream! Recommended.

TEA UGLOW Loud & Proud (White Lion Publishing, £18.99). This collection of inspirational speeches changed the conversation around what it means to be LGBTQ+ and demanded our equality in life and laws. The earliest is from 1867, the last from 2019 and they span the world, all ages, politics, sexuality, class and gender identity spectrums. All share a profound belief in equality and challenging prejudices and bias. From equal marriage to gender definitions, bullying to parenthood, this pioneering collection of talks, declarations and lectures are from people whose voices have too often been marginalised. Uglow brings together over 40 empowering and influential speeches that chart the history of the LGBTQ+ movement up to the present day. Each speech is presented with a picture of the person, commentary and information about where and when it was given. With engaging illustrations from Jack Holland, it’s a lovely object in itself and you can’t help but be inspired by these words, a call to action for all of us to continue to respond to these exceptional speeches. Assembled by trans activist Tea Uglow, with a foreword by Peter Tatchell, this anthology reminds us of the power of words when used to fire the imagination, reassure communities under pressure and drive us forward to create a better world for ourselves and those who come after us. These words dream! Recommended.

Andrew Meehan The Mystery of Love (Head of Zeus, £18.99). This second novel from Meehan gives us the life of Oscar Wilde from the one person actually closest to him, his wife Constance. Here she takes centre stage and Meehan gives her voice, reimagining this dysfunctional but very Victorian relationship, challenging a century of assumption, bias and slurs to give us a modern insight into this most dedicated of Irish couples. The lens of history distorts Wilde for us, making him things he may never have been, but this energetic ride though the Wilde marriage is engaging and fun. Opening with Constance in Italy, having changed her name and removed their children to a safe distance from the scandal surrounding Oscar, she reflects on her life with him. As she explores the discomfort of living in Oscar’s shadow we begin to understand the complex layers of love this most conscious of couplings enclosed. From the first moments of their meeting Constance is alive to the possibility of escaping the crushing conformity of her deeply unpleasant family, and Meehan gives us a fully rounded woman of her time, filled with a longing for intellectual stimulation and physical desire. She comes across as rather pleasant, which is perhaps more a reflection of the experience of scandal than of her character. It examines the devotion and tension at the heart of this marriage and forensically pares back each secret, deflect and protective habit to give us first flesh, bone, then the marrow of the Wildes’ marriage. It’s deliciously done, with very crisp brutal prose, as is fitting for the subjects, showing Constance to have as much wit and fury as the famous epigrammist himself. I rather liked her, I also loved the way that Oscar interjects to Constance’s opinions by * embedded in the text, he becomes a literal footnote!

Golnoosh Nour The Ministry of Guidance (Muswell Press, £7.99). What an absolute delight this book is, set mostly in Iran we get short, saucy and interesting snapshots of queer life in the Islamic Republic. Set in bedrooms, cafes, beaches, buses, London, a Ukrainian airport and Germany, the book covers a range of places, emotionally, erotically and geographically. Each crafted story explores with careful delicate prose a predicament, focused through the lens of that character’s life, dreams, desires and the things in society which conspire to frustrate and deny. It’s a kaleidoscope of colourful imagery and words, giving a real feel of day to day life as an LGBTQ+ person in Iran. The Tehran that Nour summons up feels as real as Hove, Hackney or Hull, with the crushes, disappointments, erotic thrills and parental observations experienced by us all. Nour’s sharply attentive voice challenges our ideas of Iran, disabuses our privilege and bias and allows us to connect, on a viscerally honest level, with queer life there. There are beautifully crafted phrases and metaphors which come upon you like a peacock kept in a kitchen, a domestic space familiar and everyday is expanded by this prose. A universe in a heartbeat, despair in a cigarette butt, the scream of desire behind a biscuit tin.

PLACING THE ‘OUT’ IN THE GREAT OUTDOORS.

LC ROSEN Camp (Penguin Books, £7.99). This is a super sweet LGBTQ+ romantic comedy that follows the reinvention of 16-year-old Randy Kapplehoff who’s set his heart on bagging the hot boy at summer camp. Randy loves spending the summer at Camp Outland for queer teens. It’s where he met his best friends. It’s where he takes to the stage in the big musical. And it’s where he fell for Hudson who’s only into straight-acting guys and barely knows theatrical Randy even exists. But this year is different. Randy has reinvented himself as ‘Del’ - buff, masculine, stuffed with attitude and tight shorts and on the market. Even if it means giving up show tunes, nail polish and his unicorn bed sheets, he’s determined to get Hudson to fall for him. As the book progresses we learn exactly what it’s going to cost Randy and Hudson to be authentic in a world which wants them to be otherwise. Great fun and left me with a warm smile.

BOOK REVIEWS BY ERIC PAGE
than six months ago we were blindly ignorant of what was to come. The first death in the UK from Aids was in December 1981. It would be more than six years before a government information leaflet would drop on to the door mats of every household in Britain, and when it did a community was blame. We were responsible for inflicting this potential horror upon the wider world. Gay men and those assumed to be were dismissed from their jobs without warning irrespective of their health status, and those who looked sick evicted by unscrupulous landlords. Birth families abandoned their sons in shame and then upon death swooped in to collect as life partners had no legal inheritance rights and found themselves homeless.

There was no government financial package for the employed, the self-employed or to prop up a business if the owner was too sick to run it. There were no government calls for additional PPE or any recognition whatsoever that anyone affected needed help and resources. We were on our own. The Conservative government of the day with its broadening ‘On Yer Bike’ approach would introduce legislation that accused local authorities of promoting homosexuality if they openly supported LGBTQ+ communities. At the height of an approaching pandemic under the fear of hastily introduced legislation, LGBTQ+ support groups were abandoned by local authorities when needed the most. Lifelines were severed. Even some healthcare workers refused to tend early Aids patients driven by the fear of what was incorrectly perceived to be a high-risk duty. It was members of the LGBTQ+ community working as doctors, nurses and ancillary support who volunteered to help these patients, and no-one stood on their steps or balconies of a Thursday to clap for those people.

The emergence of the HIV virus and its then inevitable development into Aids-related illnesses was a gift to the conservative (with a small ‘c’). Those with a firm traditional or religious conviction held nothing back in linking the world’s ills to the sexual behaviour of the deviant and the virus among us as everything from a sign from God to a reason to return to our multiplication-times-tables.

Today the situation is completely different in that we are all in this together. And while there are reports that Covid-19 may disproportionately affect some communities more than others, these reports are upturned by pattern-breaking examples just as any early indication that this was a problem for old people has been swiftly addressed by fatalities stretching across all ages. Although as with most illnesses those already in the lower-paid jobs and most in need are more likely to be affected not only by the virus but by its far-reaching consequences.

No one is to blame. And while there is the odd fundamentalist citing responsibility for our current woes upon the growth in gay Pride events, these voices are so few they barely raise an eyebrow.

However, some responsibility does fall upon us to be part of the solution where previously we may have been treated as very much the problem. The smash and grab approach of panic buying we saw at the beginning of the current crisis is more likely to be a signal of anxiety than it is immorality. Illuminating behaviour from those who have never before faced the threat of life-threatening sickness just for existing.

We know how it feels to be isolated and ignored and rather than retreating into our own anxious sorrow or selfish copy cat choreography, we can step forward to help others considering that the need may not be addressed by fatalities stretching across all ages. And while there is the odd report of the possibility must be treated with an anxious sorrow or selfish copy cat choreography, we can step forward to help others considering that the need may not be addressed by fatalities stretching across all ages. And while there is the odd report of the possibility must be treated with anxious sorrow or selfish copy cat choreography, we can step forward to help others considering that the need may not be addressed.
I write this article as a gay 60-year-old, my head buzzing with memories and hands burning with arthritis. I’m amazed at how different the world is for LGBTQ+ people now than when I was young. Having a network of supportive peers is something I’ve yearned for all my life. I feel so lucky I have finally found a social group where I genuinely fit in and it is something I will never take for granted.

Being part of MindOut’s 50+ peer support group has saved my sanity. As a 60-year-old man I don’t feel like I can relate to the younger gay scene.

I came out in 1973 at the age of 15. Homosexuality had only recently been legalised, and then not until a person reached the age of 21, so I lived my first six years out of the closet as a ‘criminal’. I wanted to meet other gay people and attended some of the first Campaign for Homosexual Equality groups, yet there were barely four people in attendance.

My parents were terrified of the neighbours finding out my secret and having their middle-class respectability violated. While thankfully I wasn’t thrown out for being gay, home life was toxic and I was subjected to sexual and emotional abuse from family members. I felt imprisoned in my bedroom. This led to depression and self-harm. Despite my closest school friend also being gay, it was a lonely time and I desperately wanted to find other people I could relate to.

My first relationship was at the age of 19 with another lost soul, a homeless hotel pot washer with no family or friends. He had been reared by nuns in a Catholic care home. Sadly it didn’t work out and once again I found myself feeling lonely and isolated.

After finishing my degree, I plucked up the courage to join a local gay social group but it wasn’t the type of group I needed. I was desperate for support and friendship, but the focus back then was on having sex. At the age of 21 I had a breakdown.

Then in the 1980s I met the love of my life and we had 24 years together. Our relationship was strong but the political backdrop was unsafe. Thatcher’s Section 28 and the Aids epidemic cast a shadow over our happiness. Being gay was still considered taboo, the neighbours were distant and our car window was smashed. It sent my partner into a depression and we ended up splitting up although we remained friends until his death two years ago.

Being part of MindOut’s 50+ peer support group has saved my sanity. As a 60-year-old man I don’t feel like I can relate to the younger gay scene, I don’t feel like I fit in with the culture. The MindOut group is a safe and supportive space where we can talk freely about anything that is important to us. The group is facilitated by an experienced group facilitator and is run for an 18-week period (two blocks of nine weeks). Group members are asked to commit to regular weekly attendance, attending at least six sessions out of every block of nine weeks. Members unable to maintain this commitment may lose their place under the group agreement three week rule. I find this rule very grounding as seeing the same faces each week gives me a great sense of stability and we have all formed a close connection.

The peer support group is designed to provide a safe supportive space where participants can talk and listen to others about issues that are important to them and their wellbeing, with a particular focus on being 50+, feelings of isolation and connecting with other LGBTQ+ people aged 50+. I wish there had been a charity like MindOut around when I was younger, but I’m so grateful it’s there for me now. I have finally found my people.

MINDOUT INFO
MindOut groups are now meeting online. Please do get in touch if you would like to know more about the 50+ group, or any of our other regular, weekly groups. You can contact us at any time for mental health support.

We run an online instant chat service, please see www.mindout.org.uk for opening times. Or you can email us on info@mindout.org.uk or phone us on 01273 234839 and we will get back to you as soon as possible.

MindOut is running a number of initiatives to support LGBTQ+ people aged 50+, also focussing on the needs of people aged 70+. If you would like to know more or get involved please contact us as above.

MindOut services are confidential, non-judgemental, impartial, independent of mainstream services and open to all. We are run by and for LGBTQ+ people who have experience of mental health issues. We aim to improve the mental wellbeing of LGBTQ+ communities and to reduce health inequality.

We do this by:

- Listening to and responding to the LGBTQ+ experience of mental health
- Offering hope through positive relationships and professional expertise
- Preventing isolation, crisis and suicidal distress in LGBTQ+ communities
- Providing safe spaces for people to meet and support each other
- Helping people protect their rights and get their voices heard
- Campaigning and creating conversations about LGBTQ+ mental health throughout the world

MindOut is needed because LGBTQ+ people:

- Do not get the support they need for their mental health from mainstream services
- Often feel isolated from LGBTQ+ communities
- Face additional discrimination, exclusion and minority stress
- Deserve a space where their identities are recognised and understood

We welcome all LGBTQ+ people and those who may not identify as LGBTQ+ including men who have sex with men, women who have sex with women, intersex people, people who previously identified as trans and people who are questioning their sexual and/or gender identities. If in doubt, please do contact us.
May 11-17 is Dying Matters Week. Now, no one wants to think about the day they will die, but getting some groundwork done while you are healthy makes perfect sense.

Some of the things listed below will need to be witnessed and signed, but these things can be finalised once the Covid-19 lockdown has been lifted.

Make a Will: From a few possessions to a mass fortune, you should make a Will to say who you would like to have what. You may have a long-term partner, but unless you name them as your beneficiary, everything will go to your nearest living relative or worse still, the Crown will vacuum up all your financial worth. While you have the time, have a read through the different options out there – some Wills can be created online, but you will need two witnesses who are not mentioned in the Will to sign it after the lockdown.

### “You may have a long-term partner, but unless you name them as your beneficiary, everything will go to your nearest living relative”

**Living Will**: A Living Will is a document that sets out the kind of treatments you would refuse when you are no longer able to communicate your needs. It is of the utmost importance that you speak to your healthcare professional about the types of treatments you would consider refusing and the risks and benefits of doing so. In these discussions you should talk about:

- The circumstances under which you would not want to receive the specified treatment
- You should specify whether you want to receive the specific treatment, even if this could lead to your death.

Please note that a Living Will can’t be used to request certain treatment and can’t be used to ask for your life to be ended. This document should be updated, signed and dated regularly and given to all your healthcare professionals.

**Advance Statement**: This is a useful document to put together while you are in good health. This document will be used by those who are caring for you when you are no longer able to talk. Questions to answer could be:

- What food/drink do you like?
- Do you prefer a bath or a shower?
- What kind of films/music/TV shows do you like?
- What clothes do you like?
- Are you a night owl or an early bird?
- How many pillows do you like to sleep on?
- Do you have a faith/no faith?
- Who should be consulted in your care plan?
- Who would you like/not like to visit?

**Emotional Will**: An Emotional Will is not legally binding so you can be as creative as you like, listing the things that have brought you great pleasures in life, from a book you would like others to read, to a favourite poem or joke. You can also leave notes and photos for the people you have left behind. I would argue at this point that now is as good a time as any to share the things you love with all those you cherish.

### JUST CONNECT

I don’t read a newspaper on a daily basis so I expect I have missed cartoonists depicting our current national situation as a giant Noah’s Ark crammed with face masked couples drifting away from Europe on melted glacier flood water. With Brexit achieved, and to extend the metaphor, I wonder where it will land when the troubled waters subside? Will our Mount Ararat be the shore of Manhattan and a new status as the 51st state or will we land in New Zealand and continue negotiation of our transformational new trade deals or, as seems not unlikely, will the Ark simply float around for as long as it takes for a next generation administration to ask the EU to readmit us?

Our self-imposed international isolation is one thing and sits in stark contrast to our uninvited imperative, the need to self-isolate, which is of course essential but also problematic for all of us and I hope, cherished reader, that you are now and will remain well and are not having to cope entirely alone.

One journalist recently wrote about how relieved he was not to be contacted as one of the million and a half members of our population considered to be most at risk from infection, only to lose any sense of security when his paranoia intervened and he started worrying that he might have been left off the list.

Government has decided that I am simply too old to be called up for medical service and that the best thing I can do for the health of the nation is not to proffer my rusting medical skills but to avoid becoming a patient. To that end we have raised the drawbridge and are eating some of the older occupants of the fridge freezer thereby creating unique recipes combining ingredients which don’t normally coexist on a plate.

Being forced to shop for food locally at a gentle pace, and not having to zig zag around supermarkets trying to make sense of their irrational display decisions, and return home with 10% of the shopping list missing, has been a bonus in these uneasy times. Apart from a wine delivery, which is necessitated by my inability to carry the quantity required, we are not relying on supermarket deliveries.

Only when deprived of easy access to human company do you realise how enjoyable the casual interactions of everyday living are, the running gag with the newsagent, updates on the health of the grocer’s mother-in-law, baseless weather predictions and the improbable conspiracy theories around the council’s failure to deliver services. A long list.

“Only when deprived of easy access to human company do you realise how enjoyable the casual interactions of everyday living are”

George Burns suggested that happiness was having a large, loving, caring, close knit family, in another city. This probably tells you more about George Burns than the pursuit of happiness as I find that, at times like the present, life alone and unconnected would be miserable but unbearable without the ability to contact friends and family. So applaud the NHS from the safety of your windows but let’s also be grateful for Facetime, Skype, WhatsApp, Zoom and all the other derided (by me) platforms for social interaction which help to keep us sane.

I never thought I would think that!
HOW TO SURVIVE A LOCKDOWN

As someone whose business card says ‘Guru of Mindfulness’ (and, until a recent police warning, ‘General Practitioner’) I feel uniquely placed to offer words of wisdom in these troubling times. I trust the following activity ideas will help our readers get through this current crisis.

Meditation. What could be more enjoyable and relaxing than sitting in a chair whilst focussing on your breath entering and leaving your body? Apart from pornography, absolutely nothing! The great thing about meditation is its simplicity. Just sit on a chair. Breathe in. Hold your breath for as long as possible. Breathe out. I’m pretty sure that’s what you do. Anyway, there’s bound to be some beardy-weirdie on Youtube who’ll show you what to do if you get stuck.

Read a book. For younger readers a ‘book’ is really just a PDF you can hold in your hand. There are basically two types: those that people actually want to read (they’re usually set in Regency times and focus on an innocent but somehow saucy maid servant who is seduced by the lord of the manor and then – twist! – she turns out to be his abandoned daughter). Then there’s the rest which are basically boring but somehow good for you. Books can be borrowed from book lending emporiums (‘libraries’) or shops which sell them (‘bookshops’). Unfortunately these are all closed at the moment so I suppose you’d better download them as PDFs.

Sex. If, like me, you’re unaccountably single you will still have your gentlemanly needs to attend to. Channeling the spirit of Make Do and Mend from the First World War (or possibly WW2. Maybe even the Suez Crisis) I’ve constructed my own self-pleasuring device from easily attainable household materials. It basically comprises a system of 27 pulleys, 35 levers and the top bit of an orange squeezer. It also comes with an emergency button which instantly disengages the ‘crushinator’ part of the mechanism whilst also calling for an ambulance.

Help someone. Few activities are more rewarding than actually helping a fellow human being. There’s a charming older gentleman who lives near me in a lovely three-bedroom flat on the seafront. Sadly, he has no family and is all alone in the world and so I have taken it upon myself to do his shopping and even put some plates and onions are possible. You can use growbags, pots, round and/or oblong. I realise that a lot of you will either have small gardens, a balcony or even just a window box so a full range of vegetables isn’t a viable project. If you’re lucky enough to have a sun-kissed balcony then tomatoes, peppers, radishes and strawberries could prosper. Also salad leaves (pick as required) and a variety of herbs, mustard cress and spring onions are possible. You can use growbags, pots, round and/or oblong. If your pots have no holes in their bottoms then you must make them yourself with a suitable but safe sharp instrument (take care!). Gravel, small stones (not from the beach as this is illegal) or broken crockery (keep in with your favourite Greek restaurant, mine is in Preston Street) will provide drainage to the balcony below.

Happy growing and I’ll update you on my success, failures, fruits and dahlias and some helpful tips (if you want asparagus it’ll take five years!).
REAL HEROES

It's Saturday, March 28, and I'm two weeks in self isolation and social distancing. It's exactly 14 days since I last hugged a friend and felt someone close to me. By the time you're reading this it will be the end of April and a lot of things will have changed even more. I wish I could be optimistic and say that things will be better but statistics and facts from other countries are telling us that we are only at the very beginning.

Don't get me wrong, things will get better and we will get to enjoy all the things we used to, prior to Covid-19, but not just yet. Be patient. Even though no previous generations have ever experienced what we are currently going through, they have been through wars, poverty and other horrible situations that ended. And once all these things end, new life begins.

The entire world is collectively going through the same as us and we all are equally helpless when faced with this virus. Our race, gender, sexuality, socio-economic status and skin colour doesn't make us immune when it comes to pandemics. I do hope that once this pandemic is over we will all have reflected on our lives and realised what is and isn't important.

If anything, this situation has highlighted and reminded us who are the heroes and zeroes of our times. The ones we used to idolise and treat differently are all cooped up at home with luxuries and comforts. Footballers, Instagram influencers, artists, celebrities and other A to Z-listers, which can make in a month what your average worker makes in their lifetime, are sat in their lounge encouraging their followers to stay at home in order to stop the spreading of the virus.

Average workers are out there fighting the virus. From nurses and doctors to supermarket employees, everyone is out there every single day, risking their lives in order for us to be able to stay at home and avoid getting infected. They are literally the backbone of civilisation and they are keeping everything in working order yet they struggle to pay their monthly bills, student loans or any other expenses because our society doesn't reward them for their efforts and achievements.

“They are keeping everything in working order yet they struggle to pay their monthly bills... because our society doesn't reward them for their efforts and achievements”

When I was growing up everyone wanted to be a doctor or a nurse, a pilot or a firefighter, a teacher or a police person. These days everyone wants to be famous, they want to have followers, they want to get likes and make money to live in a big house like the Beckhams, while driving expensive cars and dining in overpriced restaurants. But none of these things are of any worth today. None of these things will save your life.

When all this is over let us not forget who was there for us. Who risked their life by emptying our bins or cleaning the hospital floors. Who saved us and who deserves our “likes”, gratitude and respect.

DOWN TO A TEA

Ah tea... it's a wondrous thing. Keeps me happy and sane during the day, gets me through hard times, improves the better times. I wonder what the record is for the number of cups of tea I've had in a day? Eight? 12? 27? It probably isn't 27... that'd be one cup every 28 minutes or something.

Could be close though. I write this sat at my desk with a mug of homemade tea and am typing away. It's all very exciting. I mean, anything could happen. The mug has got ‘Blah, blah blah’ written on it. It's life on the edge stuff.

I'm sat by the window at my basement flat so can see the street outside and the comings and goings of people as they do their thing. Not that there are many comings and goings at the moment what with the lockdown an all. My attention turns to my email account and the usual junk that gets sent to me.

There's one about having a smart meter installed when things are more relaxed. I wonder if this is a job I could do? I'm quite smart. I can read. It must be quite nice being a smart meter installer. I could drive around in a van stuffed full of equipment, getting my lump hammer in and out of it. Best thing about it might be the way you can have a mild snoop around everyone's house that you visit. I don't mean they go riffling through your drawers or anything, that'd be rude, but they get to see all the different styles, see people's choices of colour and furniture. Is everywhere painted grey? That would be the way to find out.

“It must be quite nice being a smart meter installer. I could drive around in a van stuffed full of equipment, getting my lump hammer in and out of it”

I wonder if there's ever a situation where they have to back out of the house and politely leg it? If the smart meter needs to be put in the basement and that's where the customer's sex dungeon is, do they quickly flee before they see the full range of toys down there? If there's a chest freezer in the garage where the meter's going, and they pop it open and see a mass of frozen road kill, do they muffle their screams and run? If they pop into the living room and see row after row of dolls heads strewn across the floor, do they casually make their excuses and leg it?

It's probably not that exciting. You probably rock up, install the meter in the quintessential British hallway and head onto the next stop. I guess you might get offered a cup of tea as you do so.

Perhaps a biscuit. Imagine the number of cups of tea they must get through in a day? Good grief, this could be my ideal job! I might have to arrange some toilet facilities though. That much tea would have consequences and there's only so many empty cola bottles you can fill up in your van before it looks rather unprofessional. Something to ponder though...
WE’LL HAVE A GAY OLD TIME

I’m 52. When Mozart was my age he’d been dead for 17 years. As composing goes, it matters nought to me that I’m hurrying towards the grave without so much as a nursury rhyme to my name, but something else keeps me awake at night; it’s the thought that I might live long enough to be lonely. My partner and I have not even generated a ready-made care team. Oh well, never mind. It’s not a given that your kids look after you anyway.

Personally, I have a disproportionately high quota of older LGBTQ+ friends. To me, people over 60 are infinitely more interesting than youngsters; they’re living, breathing time-capsules filled with tales of bygone days. I’d love to know more young lesbians, but they’re as rare as hen’s teeth. The lack of young lesbian visibility today, indicates that the ‘me’ of tomorrow will not be writing about a scene she has had little to do with.

“I’d love to know more young lesbians, but they’re as rare as hen’s teeth”

I think LGBTQ+ people age differently from the rest of the population. Lots of us have had to fight for the rights that so many straights take for granted, and it’s made us quite feisty if you please.

Most older lesbians I know are either devoted to their partners, or very happily single. By single, I mean they don’t appear to crave sexual relationships to define them like so many straight women of their generation have to. They are the happiest people I know, and I wouldn’t cross them either!

Lots of the older gay men I know have benefitted from careers that paid well and provided decent pensions. These old queens travel the world, they love their partners, their pets, their sexual dalliances (not always in that order). I don’t think I will ever recover from some of the stories I’ve heard, I’ve laughed till I cried, and it’s men like this who keep me coming out to play on the Brighton scene.

In these crazy days of the coronavirus pandemic, we have all come to realise just how precious our older, physically more vulnerable population is. During the first week of lockdown, I was instantly cheered to see a Facebook post of darling David Raven aka Maisie Trollette, 86 years young and happily self-isolating. What a treasure he is.

The older population of Brighton is a wonderful thing. Some of them are quite literally old hippies, others are bohemians, some are Tories, most are open-minded, unlike the old folk of anywhere else in the world (apart from San Francisco). I believe we owe it to them to provide appropriate social care. I’d like to see old people’s homes designed to cater for our very special community, after all, I may end up there one day.

The old people today are the very fire starters who set the world ablaze with gay rights. They will not go gently into that great night, they’ll go out like so many of my older friends, raging against the dying of the light, laughing, loving, and covered in glitter.

TANTALISING HOMO HERMITS

So now we’re all anchorites, secluded in our naughty nunneries, monasteries of masc, or manly marabouts, cenobiai gender non-specific folk, trans stylites, dyke eremites, non-binary recluses or bog standard solituidarians. I know! Go look them up, learn some new vocab today. We’re all in this together!

I’m choosing a different type of seclusion every day, keeping it real, serving up ascetic precision, category is: Homo Hermitage. I am withdrawn from the world, retired from society and imagine the world to be no bigger than a hazelnut, but filled with wonders none the less, much like I imagine Julian of Norwich did; who was a woman. Mother Julian, a serious anchorite in her day, walled herself up in her church and took to doling out advice from a small hatch. People walked across England to implore her wisdom, although I’d be far more interested in where she had learned her bricking up skills and what kind of mortar is best for permanently enclosing oneself in a cell.

I’ve always been fond of feudal mystic Julian of Norwich. My dear grandmother Ivy used to sing a song about her, and strapped into the sidecar of her motorbike, my sisters and I would harmonise, in that sweet tight way that only family voices can achieve. The bungee cords, twisted and stretched around us, keeping us from being thrown out on the bramble strewn verges of the Welsh country lanes chaffed like hell as Ivy took another corner at 50 miles an hour, the wheel under us lifting, but she interpreted our screams as excitement and it drove her onwards, faster.

‘All shall be well again’ went the chorus of the song, ‘Let the winter come and go, all shall be well again, I know’. It’s a song that reminds me of Ivy every time I hear and sing it. Simple, profound and delicately subversive. Dame Julian also happened to have written the first book in the English language known to be by a woman. Revelation of Divine Love, written around 1395, which Ivy would quote huge chunks of. Filled with her visions, mystical prose, medieval medicine and serious advanced ideas about gender and sexuality and Julian’s own take on love; which is unconditional. It was Ivy’s bible.

The last time I rode in Ivy’s sidecar I was 16, we screamed across England on the old A4 heading to Norwich – she’d added a seatbelt by that time – to pick lavender from outside Julian’s Church, re-constructed after being flattened by a wartime Nazi bomb. Ivy said the words and plants were the only authentic part of Julian’s life to be left to us, from an unbroken link of spring and regrowth. She passed me a spliff, one of those tiny carrot shaped ones she used to pass me in Maces Spring, Virginia where she said she’d first kissed Elvis I tuned out Hitler and waxed lyrically about Mable Carter’s pizzicato and living in the Welsh country lanes chaffed like hell as Ivy took another corner at 50 miles an hour, the wheel under us lifting, but she interpreted our screams as excitement and it drove her onwards, faster.

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A NEW PERSPECTIVE

I’ll be 30 this year. I had so many things written down on very lovely stationery for what I wanted to accomplish in my last six months of being 29, unfortunately Covid-19 has not only ruined all of it, it’s kicked it so hard in the proverbial twigs and berries it may as well be like this time didn’t exist, or so I thought.

Like so many of us I am at my best when I am doing what I love - I can’t do it the way I want to right now - and I had been resigned during this lockdown to thinking that I would be forgotten, that I would create nothing, and that it would suck my life and career down the drain with so many others, and I’d be left a petulant child on the floor crying for my old life.

However, the position that we find ourselves in at the moment has done strange things to me, apart from talking to household appliances, the toaster's new name is Barbara. Far away from the loud, sweaty, cornucopia of our rainbow of bars and clubs that we have all come to know as home, I realised that I hadn’t allowed myself a moment of peace in five years. I’ve seen each person take this journey together, but in very different ways, personally I’m isolating alone, meaning that I have to sit with myself as a person, off the stage. Daunting? Yes. Necessary? Yes. A one-way ticket to alcoholism and compulsive sock pairing? Absolutely. But far from the disconnect I had anticipated, my friends, colleagues and fans were not gone, only moved to a place of safety. My family had not forgotten me but had only wanted to connect more.

I am learning that it doesn’t always take just the one way I know how to make people happy, that I and all of us as a group have more to give. Our community did not disappear, it’s buzzing in the background, anxious to create something outrageous from the fire. The LGBTQ+ community has never been quiet. Nothing has managed to silence it, or stop it moving forward, it simply adapts, coming back louder and stronger than ever before.

“The LGBTQ+ community has never been quiet. Nothing has managed to silence it, or stop it moving forward, it simply adapts, coming back louder and stronger than ever before”

The internet has blown up with performances from our favourite artists, some people are being brave enough to create something they never thought would’ve been possible without the time to be bored out of their minds. Essentially this unprecedented time in our lives has taught us to adapt, our old way of life isn’t relevant anymore, and when we can all run out and rejoin each other again it will be a chance to take what we’ve learned while sitting on our asses at home and use it. Whether that's newfound kindness, a new skill, or just old parts of ourselves that have been forgotten. It’s up to us to not see this as a part of life gone missing, we are not losing time, we are gaining a new perspective.
LGBT SERVICES

ALLSORTS YOUTH PROJECT
Drop-in for LGBT or unsure young people under 26 Tues 5.30–8.30pm 01273 722121 or email info@allsortsyouth.org.uk www.allsortsyouth.org.uk

BRIGHTON & HOVE POLICE
Report all homophobic, biphobic or transphobic incidents to: 24/7 assistance call Police on 101 (emergencies 999) Report online to: www.sussex.police.uk
LGBT team (not 24/7) email: LGBT@sussex.pnn.police.uk
• LGBT Officer PC James Breeds. Tel: 101 ext 551868 James.breeds@sussex.pnn.police.uk

BRIGHTON & HOVE LGBT SAFETY FORUM
Independent LGBT forum working within the communities to address and improve safety and access issues in Brighton & Hove. For more info: 01273 675445 or admin@lgbt-help.com or www.lgbt-help.com

BRIGHTON & HOVE LGBT SWITCHBOARD
• LGBT Older Peoples’ Project
• LGBT Health Improvement and Engagement Project
• LGBTQ Disabilities Project
• Rainbow Café: support for LGBT+ people with Dementia
• Volunteering opportunities 01273 234 009 Helpline hours: Wed & Thur, 7–9.30pm; trans-only webchat on Sun 3–5pm: call 01273 204 050 email info@switchboard.org.uk webchat switchboard.org.uk/helpline www.switchboard.org.uk/brighton

BRIGHTON ONEBODYONEFAITH
Formerly The Gay Christian Movement. Contact: Nigel Nash nigelnash@me.com www.onebodyonefaith.org.uk

BRIGHTON WOMEN’S CENTRE
Info, counselling, drop-in space, support groups 01273 698032 or visit www.womenscentre.org.uk

LESBIAN & GAY AA
12-step self-help programme for alcohol addictions: Sun, 7.30pm, Chapel Royal, North St, Bn (side entrance). 01273 203 343 (general AA line)

LGBT COCAINE ANONYMOUS
Meeting every Tues 6.30-8pm, 6 Tilbury Pl, Brighton, BN2 1GY. CA isn’t allied with any outside organisation, and neither endorses or opposes any causes. Helpline 0800 0612025.
www.cocaeanonymous.org.uk

LGBT NA GROUP
Brighton-based LGBT (welcomes others) Narcotics Anonymous group every Tue 6.30–8pm, Millwood Centre, Nelson Row, Kingswood St. 0300 999 1212

LGBT+ MEDITATION GROUP
Meditation & discussion, every 2nd & 4th Thu, 5.30–7pm, Anahata Clinic, 119 Edward St, Brighton. 07799 861 367 or www.bodhitreebrighton.org.uk

LGBT+ & HIV CAB HIV PROJECT
Money, benefits, employment, housing, info, advocacy. Appointments: Tue-Thu 9am-4pm, Wed 9am-12.30pm Brighton & Hove Citizens Advice Bureau, Brighton Town Hall. 01273 733390 ext 520 or www.brightonhovecab.org.uk

MINDOUT
Independent, impartial services run by and for LGBTQ people with experience of mental health issues. 24 hr confidential answerphone: 01273 234839 or email info@mindout.org.uk and out of hours online chat www.mindout.org.uk

NAVIGATE
Social/peer support group for FTM, transmasculine & gender queer people, every 1st Wed 7-9pm & 3rd Sat of month 1–3pm at Space for Change, WIndlesham Venue, BN1 3AH. https://navigatebrighton.wordpress.com/

PEER ACTION
Regular low cost yoga, therapies, swimming, meditation & social groups for people with HIV. Contact @peeraction.net or www.peeraction.net

RAINBOW FAMILIES
Support group for lesbian and/or gay parents 07951 082013 or info@rainbowfamilies.org.uk www.rainbowfamilies.org.uk

RAINBOW HUB
Information, contact, help and guidance to services for LGBT+ communities in Brighton, Hove and Sussex at Rainbow Hub drop in LGBT+ one-stop shop: 93 St James Street, BN2 1TP. 01273 675445 or visit www.therainbowhubbrighton.com

SOME PEOPLE
Social/support group for LGBT or questioning aged 14-19, Thu 5.30-7.30pm, Hastings. Call/text Catherine Connolly 07973 325507 or email somepeople@eastsussex.gov.uk

THE VILLAGE MCC
Christian church serving the LGBTQ community. Sundays 6pm, Somerset Day Centre, Kemptown 07476 667353 www.thevillagemcc.org.uk

VICIM SUPPORT
Practical, emotional support for victims of crime 08453 899 528

THE ARUN GAY SOCIETY
Social Group welcomes all in East & West Sussex Areas. Call/text: 07593 513171 www.tagsonline.org.uk

AVERT
Sussex HIV & AIDS info service 01403 210202 or email confidential@avert.org

BRIGHTON & HOVE CAB HIV PROJECT
Money, benefits, employment, housing, info, advocacy. Appointments: Tue-Thu 9am-4pm, Wed 9am-12.30pm Brighton & Hove Citizens Advice Bureau, Brighton Town Hall. 01273 733390 ext 520 or www.brightonhovecab.org.uk

CLINIC M
Free confidential testing & treatment for STIs including HIV, plus Hep A & B vaccinations. Claude Nicol Centre, Sussex County Hospital, on Weds from 5-8pm. 01273 664 721 or www.brightonsexualhealth.com

LAWSUIT
Medical advice, treatment for HIV+, specialist clinics, diet & welfare advice, drug trials. 01273 664 722

MARTIN FISHER FOUNDATION
HIV Self testing kits via digital vending machines available from: The Brighton Sauna, Subline, Marlborough Hotel and The Rainbow Hub martinfisherfoundation.org

SUBSTANCE MISUSE SERVICE
Pavilions Partnership. Info, advice, appointments & referrals 01273 731 900. Drop-in: Richmond House, Richmond Rd, Brighton, Mon-Wed & Fri 10am-4pm, Thur 10am-7pm, Sat 10am-1pm, 9th Floor, Hove 01273 680714 Mon & Wed 10am-12pm & 1pm-3pm, Tue & Thu 10am-4pm. info & advice only (no assessments), Fri 10am-12pm & 1pm-3pm.
• Gary Smith (LGBT* Support) 07884 476634 or email gsmith@pavilions.org.uk
For more info visit weblink: pavilions.org.uk/services/treatment-recovery-options/

SUSSEX BEACON
24 hour nursing & medical care, day care 01273 694222 or www.sussexbeacon.org.uk

TERRENCE HIGGINS TRUST SERVICES
For more info about these free services go to the THT office, 61 Ship St, Brighton, Mon–Fri, 10am–5pm 01273 764200 or info.brighton@tht.org.uk
• Venue Outreach: info on HIV, sexual health, personal safety, safer drug/alcohol use, free condoms/lubricant for men who have sex with men
• The Bushes Outreach Service @ Dukes Mound: advice, support, info on HIV & sexual health, and free condoms & lube
• Notrech (online/mobile app outreach in Brighton & Hove): info/advice on HIV/sexual health/local services.
• THF Brighton Outreach workers online on Grindr, Scruff, & Squirt
• Condom Male: discreet, confidential service posts free condoms/lube/sexual health info to men who have sex with men without access to East Sussex commercial gay scene
• Positive Voices: volunteers who go to organisations to talk about personal experiences of living with HIV
• Fastest (HIV testing): walk-in, (no appointment) rapid HIV testing service open to MSM (Men who have sex with Men). Anyone from the African communities; male and female sex workers and anyone who identifies as Trans or non-binary. We now offer rapid 15 minutes results for HIV/Syphilis: Mon 10am–8pm, Tues-Fri 10am–5pm, Thurs 10am–8pm (STI testing available)
• Sauna Fastest at The Brighton Sauna (HIV testing): walk-in, (no appointment) rapid HIV testing service for men who have sex with men, results in 20 minutes: Wed 6–8pm (STI testing available)
FaceToFace: confidential info & advice on sexual health & HIV for men who have sex with men, up to 6 one hour appointments
• Specialist Training: wide range of courses for groups/ individuals, specific courses to suit needs
• Counselling: from qualified counsellors for up to 12 sessions for people living with/affected by HIV
• What Next? Thurs eve, 6 week peer support group work programme for newly diagnosed HIV+ gay men
• HIV Support Services: info, support & practical advice for people living with/affected by HIV
• HIV Welfare Rights Advice: Find out about benefits or benefit changes. Advice line: Tue–Thur 1:30–2.30pm: 1–2 apt suitability for advice & workshops on key benefits

TERRENCE HIGGINS EASTBOURNE
• Web support & info on HIV, sexual health & local services via retreach and myhiv.org.uk
• Free condom postal service contact Grace Coughlan on 07590 846590 or grace.coughlan@tth.org.uk

SEXUAL HEALTH WORTHING
Free confidential tests & treatment for STIs inc HIV, Hep A & B vaccinations. Worthing based 0845 11345645

NATIONAL HELPLINES
• NATIONAL LGB DOMESTIC ABUSE HELPLINE at galop.org.uk and 0800 999 5428
• SWITCHBOARD 0300 330 0630
• POSITIVELINE (EDDIE SURMAN TRUST) Mon–Fri 11am–10pm, Sat & Sun 4–10pm 0800 1696806
• MAINLINERS 02075 825226
• NATIONAL AIDS HELPLINE 08005 67123
• NATIONAL DRUGS HELPLINE 08007 76600
• THT AIDS Treatment phoneline 08459 470047
• THT direct 0845 1221200
THE VILLAGE METROPOLITAN COMMUNITY CHURCH

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