Features

14 You've never had it so good
A provocative comment piece from Craig Hanlon-Smith

15 Not to be Trusted
Jason Reid on fighting the good fight

16 What’s next for gay saunas...
Jason Reid on why he hopes gay saunas will bounce back after Covid

17 National HIV Testing Week (1-7 Feb)
Terrence Higgins Trust encourages us all to give HIV the finger

18 Not on my Watch
Zoe Sutherland-Rowe reveals her research, Queer Suffragettes: Censorship and Opposing the Law, in time for a new series of talks

20 Simply (B)iconic
Rachel Badham on the bisexual+ women who made history

22 LGBTQ+ History Month 2021
The LGBTQ+ Workers’ Forum and life coach Sam Adams reveal exciting plans to mark LGBTQ+ History Month in Brighton & Hove

24 The ‘MAGIC’ Farm
Alf Le Flohic uncovers the story behind an unusual rural Kentish hangout

26 Reflections on Vaccines
Rory Finn talks to Dr Sam Hall for clarification around Covid-19 vaccines

27 Beyond Opposition Project
Prof Kath Browne announces a new research project

28 Trans World Sport
Rory Finn on the state of play for trans people’s participation in sport

29 EuroStars Drag Contest
Linda Gold’s inclusive drag TV extravaganza gears up for summer showing

30 LGBTQ+ Life Thru a Lens
Alex Klineberg takes a peek inside the world of photographer Tom Selmon

32 Brighton’s Frock Star
Jaq Bayles rummages through costume designer Philip J Shaw’s wardrobe

34 Tea, Tunes & Tinkering
Alex Klineberg catches up with local musician Nick Hudson

35 Young Carers’ Project
Ruth Sullivan talks to Alex Klineberg about supporting young carers

39 Sex on Screen
John Mercer from Birmingham City University discusses Channel 4’s It’s A Sin, sex on screen and influencing representations

40 Paul Burston
Alex Klineberg gets up to speed with one of the UK’s most influential LGBTQ+ writers, and founder of The Polari First Book Prize

41 The Last Literary Outlaw
We catch up with Dennis Cooper – one of the great alternative voices
Brighton & Hove LGBT Community Safety Forum closes

Billie Lewis, volunteer chair of Brighton & Hove LGBT Community Safety Forum (CSF) released an open letter on December 31, 2020 regarding the closure of the CSF.

After 15 years as a volunteer with CSF, including the last 10 as chair, I have agreed with my fellow committee members that this is the right time to close the CSF.

I need to concentrate on my own return to full health after a year of challenging illness, and over the past six months – due to Covid – the majority of the volunteer committee members have had to make decisions about their own futures, this has involved several having to leave Brighton for other opportunities. We have struggled to find replacements and cannot continue to operate on such a reduced committee.

We have supported thousands of individuals over the years offering support on hate crime, homelessness, domestic and sexual abuse, mental health and loneliness.

I am particularly proud of our work assisting in setting up The Rainbow Hub and the B Right On Festival and also our work with Brighton & Hove Pride from 2013 until 2018 where we ensured it was one of the most accessible outdoor events in the country. I thank all of the volunteers and service users that made all of our work possible.

Lastly my thanks go to the brilliant drag acts, performers, singers, licences, venues, statutory authorities, Scene magazine, Latest TV and the LGBTQ+ projects and organisations within the city that the CSF has worked and collaborated with over the years, it has been a real pleasure and I am sincerely grateful for your kindness and support.

I will of course personally continue to support the work of The Ledward Centre, The Rainbow Hub, The Brighton Rainbow Fund, Golden Handbags, Brighton & Hove Pride and Trans Pride and the many other important organisations our city is lucky enough to have.

May I take this opportunity to wish you all a safe and prosperous 2021.

With warmest wishes, love and light.

Billie
NATIONAL HIV TESTING WEEK
1–7 FEBRUARY 2021

GIVE HIV THE FINGER
A finger-prick test is all it takes.
ORDER A FREE HOME TEST
StartsWithMe.org.uk
OBITUARY: Keith Kerr, 1946-2020

I’m sure that all of us who knew Keith have different experiences of this big man who loved colourful clothes and whom Covid has unfairly taken from us so suddenly.

I met Keith 10 or more years ago at the Regency swimming pool in the centre of Brighton. I was with friends on yet another attempt at keeping fit, and later discovered that Keith was there with his friend Wolf, and they were the core members of the then GEMS swimming group.

Our mutual gaydar was working, we got chatting and Keith and Wolf invited us to join them for coffee afterwards at their favourite cafe nearby.

As a result, my friends and I became members of the GEMS social group, and our mutual friendships developed.

Even though GEMS no longer exists, the swimming group is still going strong. Keith reconfigured it as a WhatsApp group and we moved on to social media. Happily it continues to be successful, both for swimming (when we are allowed back in the pool again) and as a small social group for older gay men. All the members will miss him, both as a friend and as the anchor around which the group revolved.

Keith came to Brighton in the early 1980s and, during the horrors of the AIDS virus as it cut through the gay community, he was an active member of the Brighton Cares initiative that raised funds to help those many gay men so badly affected. He was always very proud of his involvement in this project, and made many friends during this time of his life.

Keith was a man of principle, old-fashioned in some ways, never forgot a birthday, and loved a long chat on the phone. His ability to recall and recount the minutiae of life was a thing of legend (both his life and yours) and he would regularly max out the one-hour free call time on his landline.

It always amazed me how many people he knew, and when bumping into old friends or work colleagues around town it was very clear that he was regarded with great warmth and was genuinely liked.

Until more recent years when health slowed him down a bit and his sense of balance caused him to adopt the use of a stick, he was a great ‘joiner in’ of things and organiser of theatre trips and restaurant outings. He loved the Trocks comedy ballet and organised several groups to see them when they came to Brighton. Among many other things, we were in the audience to see the John Wilson Orchestra and Pink Martini at the Dome, and as for his outfit for The Rocky Horror Show at the Theatre Royal…… well some things are best left unsaid. LOL.

I will miss this man a great deal,

Goodbye my friend.

Paul Baddeley

Keith was a lovely man, larger than life, forward thinking and full of positive energy. Keith made a huge contribution to Older and Out, the first LGBTQ+ inclusive social voluntary organisation based in Brighton. His towering presence, combined with a gentleness of spirit, enabled greater understanding and acceptance across our older LGBTQ+ community.

Keith understood the isolation, loneliness and mental health issues experienced by many in our community and the need for mutual support and acceptance. He was very thoughtful, reflective and deeply intelligent. He welcomed everyone and initiated Older and Out walking groups, outings, communal dinners and inclusive celebrations. He was well known in the LGBTQ+ community and loved networking at our celebratory gatherings. His positive approach to life was infectious and he’d go out of his way to encourage others to get involved. He was a good man and will be greatly missed.

Finola Brophy, member of Older and Out and chair of trustees, Rainbow Chorus
The Coast is Queer, Brighton & Hove’s festival of LGBTQ+ literature returns in digital form from Friday, February 5 to Sunday, February 7. Now in its second year, the programme of events brings together writers, performers, academics, activists and readers, for a weekend of in-conversation events, workshops, films and discussions celebrating queer lives and writing. Books will be available online via City Books.

Funded by Arts Council England, The Coast is Queer festival is a collaboration between New Writing South and Marlborough Productions with support from the University of Sussex and the University of Brighton.

Friday, February 5: Douglas Stuart in conversation, 3pm; Valerie Mason-John and Phyll Opoku-Gyimah, 5.30pm; Val McDermid in conversation with Rosie Garland, 7.30pm.

Saturday, February 6: Making Queer Film: Campbell X, 10am; New Voices in Queer Literature: Golnoosh Nour and Tanaka Mhishi, 4pm; Juno Dawson’s Lovely Trans Literary Salon with Jamie Windust, 6.30pm.

Sunday, February 7: Workshop: Love in a Cold Climate with Maria Jastrzebska, 10am; Alan Hollinghurst in conversation, 6pm.

Events are free with optional donation. To book: www.thecoastisqueer.com
All About Community: new report celebrates Lunch Positive

During 2020, HIV lunch group Lunch Positive supported more people in more ways than ever before, and the successes of its unique Covid response appear in a new strategic report published by the Sussex Health & Care Partnership.

Stronger Partnerships, Stronger Communities and a Stronger Voluntary, Community and Social Enterprise Sector explores how the voluntary sector in Sussex has responded to the Covid-19 pandemic and draws out themes, learning and recommendations for future work.

Along with the rapid adjustment to provide a Covid-response for people in the greatest need, Lunch Positive has also adapted and continued, where measures allow, its pre-Covid core work and undertaken many new developments that will continue during 2021 and beyond.

Gary Pargeter, service manager at Lunch Positive, said: “We were delighted to share our work during this most challenging year.

“2020 was exceptionally tough; we’re pleased to have reached and supported so many whose needs have been wide ranging and diverse. In addition to the essential supply of food to people with need, we have continued to support people through times of loneliness and anxiety, emotional distress and often poor mental health. Our volunteers in all their roles have been truly amazing, giving more time this year than ever before. Our work has grown, and we are deeply grateful to service users, volunteers, friends and supporters, and partner organisations.

“As always, we want to reach more people who might benefit from our support. Everyone can help by pointing people to us, looking at our website to find out more and encouraging people to get in touch.

“Inspired directly by our members’ feedback and their own words, our new motto is ‘all about community’ which we think says so much, and we thank you all for caring and supporting.”

Key Findings in the Report:

• The initial team of 27 volunteers responded [to the pandemic] with maturity, relishing the increased responsibility and with that, a sense of empowerment.
• Lunch Positive has been through a steep learning curve since March 2020, adapting existing and developing new services, Learning, at pace, they have scaled up their nutritional support both in terms of quality and quantity.
• The befriending service was developed and delivered rapidly in response to urgent need. Drawing on the expert resources of local befriending charity Together Co, they have developed appropriate delivery frameworks, safeguarding protocols, delivered induction and training to volunteers.
• Lunch Positive adapted and scaled up their provision in response to not only the additional needs of their clients but also the increasing numbers of people being referred to the services from local primary and secondary care services, particularly clinicians.

During 2020, Lunch Positive prepared and served more than 22,000 meals to people shielding, self-isolating, and with other support needs. The charity provided practical, social, emotional and mental health support to 247 people, many who were unwell, lonely or socially isolated. More than 600 hours have been given in 1-1 telephone befriending. Crucially all this support has been given by a team of volunteers who have worked tirelessly throughout the year. During the year the volunteer team gave almost 9,000 hours of their time to support others.

For more info on Lunch Positive, visit: www.lunchpositive.org

Sea Serpents seek new sponsors

Last year was a challenge for Brighton & Hove Sea Serpents (BHSS), our LGBTQ+ inclusive rugby club, but they’ve remained strong and have been active on and off the pitch.

While BHSS has been grateful for added support from sponsors Be Fabulous and Rentokil, their biggest loss was kit sponsors Bar Broadway having to close its doors permanently due to the ongoing pandemic.

While BHSS is grateful for everything they provided they need to look to the future and are looking for potential sponsors or business partners.

BHSS will continue to participate in a national gay and inclusive league; host and travel to other Sussex clubs for local friendlies and attend tournaments in the UK and abroad.

These tournaments can bring up to 2,300 people with the chance of viewing your brand logo or company name. That number is just the number of players at these tournaments alone.

Sponsors don’t have to be Brighton-based; they can be from anywhere in the Sussex area.

To discuss: email info@bhssrfc.com or contact them on Facebook / Instagram @bhssrfc.

For more info on BHSS, visit: www.bhssrfc.com/

Club Revenge Projects Grant accepted by Arts Council England

Club Revenge has announced its application for a Projects Grant has been accepted by Arts Council England.

This means that while it can’t currently open the club, it is going to be able to make some big changes to the layout, with some fancy new sound and lighting. Ultimately, it will be able to book a bigger range of LGBTQ+ artists and live music, putting on even bigger, camper events!

Club Revenge says: “So if Miss Rona just hurry up and piss off, that’d be wonderful, thanks!”

www.revenge.co.uk

Tom Selmon
Photographer & Filmmaker

Erotic Only Fans Nudes Portraits Fine Art Prints
Available for Studio & Location Bookings

www.printsbytomselmon.com
contact@tomselmon.com
The Bedford Tavern launches Urban Cooking Collective

Adam Brooks from The Bedford Tavern, said: “We understand that during lockdown things have become very difficult for many of us. We hope that the simple act of providing a home-cooked meal that can be delivered to reheat and enjoy at home will help make a small difference.”

If you (or someone you know) would benefit from this initiative, email bedfordtavernbrighton@gmail.com with a contact telephone number and it will add you to its list. Unfortunately, it is only able to deliver to Brighton & Hove residents.

@BedfordTavernBrighton

Cipher Press seeks #NewQueerVoices

Cipher Press has announced it is open for submissions from trans and gender non-conforming writers, queer writers of colour, and queer working-class writers based in the UK.

Submissions are open until Monday, May 31 and the publishing house is looking for book-length adult fiction and creative non-fiction from both agented and unagented authors. They are open to any genre and style as long as the work fits somewhere within the literary bracket and reflects some aspect of the LGBTQ+ experience. They are not accepting children’s, YA, or poetry.

Cipher Press wants the submissions process to be as accessible as possible so if you have any questions get in touch via the contact page.

For more info / submission guidelines: www.cipherpress.co.uk/submissions

Worthing Pride set to return!

Worthing Pride has announced its annual LGBTQ+ festival will be taking place on Saturday, July 10, 2021 at The Beach House Grounds on Worthing Seafront.

Event organisers have announced top drawer drag will be performing on the main stage, including: Aura Jay, Davina Sparkle, Miss Jason & Maisie Trollette, Linda Bacardi with Spice LIVE! hosting this year’s festival. In addition, stars from RuPaul’s Drag Race USA and UK, Charlie Hides and Cheryl Hole, will be brushing shoulders with the fantastic Danny Beard!

The 2021 event will be closed by the House Gospel Choir, who have received support from BBC Radio1, opened Strictly Come Dancing and performed live with Kylie Minogue. The choir’s uplifting house music will ensure Pride 2021 in Worthing goes out with a bang.

Worthing Pride organisers say: “We are happy to finally reveal months of robust planning, risk assessing and artist line-up plans. We can finally bring back the festival that has been so sorely missed. This definitely gives us and the people of Worthing something to look forward to. We are still welcoming applications for businesses that wish to support Worthing Pride for 2021. If there’s something you feel your operation can bring to the local community we would love to hear from you.”

For tickets and more info, visit: www.worthingpride.com
To get in touch, email: info@worthingpride.com

Breaking up can be difficult...

For a free consultation to discuss your options, please contact Adam Douglas in our Family Law department on 01273 204411 ext 253. Or send him an email at adam@englhayts.co.uk.

For any information on our other services, please contact us at Engleharts Solicitors, Valance Hall, Hove Street, Hove, East Sussex, BN3 2DE or email angela@englhayts.co.uk.
Celebrating LGBTQ+ voices featuring Sussex writers of colour

As part of LGBTQ+ History Month, Brighton & Hove Libraries in partnership with New Writing South and Writing Our Legacy is presenting two opportunities to get involved and celebrate new writing by Sussex-based LGBTQ+ writers of colour.

The Discover Your Inner Poet workshop and Celebrating New LGBTQ+ Voices reading will both be led by poet and activist AFLO, who was heavily involved with the Black Lives Matter (BLM) movement and believes poetry provides an opportunity to get people to engage with a topic on a deeper level.

Speaking of the events AFLO said: “As much as celebrating our history is important it’s also important to celebrate the present and what the past brings to that. “History is what influences us as creatives so it seems naturally intertwined at times. I was really involved with the BLM movement and shared some of my poetry to discuss topics such as decolonising education. We are so used to hearing people talk, but when you hear people talk and it rhymes sometimes I find it much easier to listen to. “I am hoping people will leave the workshop with either a poem or the start of a poem, as well as more confidence. I’m going to be sharing my own writing process and there will be a Q&A section. I’m hoping it will be a space where people feel confident to share what they have written. “That’s been the biggest part of poetry to me. Performing spoken word has been a life-changing experience in terms of confidence and self-esteem.”

The reading evening puts the focus squarely on QTIPoC intersectionality. “There are several amazing charities and organisations that are focused on that but in general we feel quite missed,” said AFLO. “Of course everyone is welcome to attend but the focus is to put a spotlight on that intersectionality. In the UK it’s LGBT+ History Month and in the US it’s Black History Month, so it’s important to hold those spaces. There’s definitely a lack of visibility in that arena. Its changing and the ripples of 202 are going to continue that change but it still needs to be an active effort before it feels like the norm and we don’t need to differentiate between those spaces.”

Tickets to both events are free, but you need to register on Eventbrite for security reasons as the events are online using Zoom. To register will need your Brighton & Hove Libraries card number. If you’re not a member you can sign up for free!

WORKSHOP: DISCOVER YOUR INNER POET. Sunday, February 21. 3-4.30pm

A one-off fun and inspirational introduction to poetry the workshop is open to people of all backgrounds, aged 16+. It is suitable for beginners as well as more experienced writers.

CELEBRATING NEW LGBTQ+ VOICES. Thursday, February 25. 7-8pm

An evening of new writing from LGBTQ+ writers of colour, including Joyoti Grech Cato, Lisa Clinnie-Somers, Suchi Chatterjee and Ameet Vaghela, followed by a DJ set.

For more info, visit: www.newwritingsouth.com

A Big Night In with MindOut

Stuck for something to do in lockdown? MindOut, the LGBTQ+ mental health service, has got you covered.

Join Ophelia Payne and guests, including Misty Van Carter, Sperm Donna, Richard Energy and Sweet Boy, on Zoom for a night of drag performances, bingo, games and more in aid of MindOut on Thursday, February 4 from 7.30pm.

Big prizes to be won, including: a Craft Gin Club subscription worth £160 and luxury handmade soaps and bath bombs from PennyGrace Melts.

Tickets £10 include access to the private Zoom party, bingo cards and exclusive drag performances.

To book, visit www.paypal.com/paypalme/paynerelefeight. Make sure you include names of attendees and email contact details with your booking. A link to the private Zoom room will be emailed along with your bingo ticket.

www.mindout.org.uk

Friendship Lounge with Queer in Brighton

On supposedly the most romantic night of the year, join Queer in Brighton on Zoom on Sunday, February 14 from 6.30pm to celebrate the truest form of love: queer friendship.

Queer in Brighton has invited some special guests to help delve into the joy that friendship brings into our lives. EJ Scott will be guiding you through making an original 1970s cocktail/mocktail, and you’ll get to sip it together while enjoying lounge beats from DJ Xzan. If that’s not enough, they will get you playing with words and gestures, and challenge you to some creative tasks.

The event is totally free but you need to book your space to get your Zoom link. You can also make a voluntary donation at checkout.

Upon booking, provide your postal address so Queer in Brighton can send it too.

The evening will be live captioned. If you’d like to discuss access needs, email info@queerinbrighton.co.uk

To book, visit: https://tinyurl.com/y8tc7hr2

New Grief Group with Roger Wheeler

The Grief Group is a place where you can talk honestly and privately about things you might not talk to a professional about.

Somewhere to just talk about your real feelings to others who have experienced loss. There are no experts, therapists or counsellors, just others who are going through it too.

To register your interest, email: roger.wheeler.u5a@gmail.com
Trans Can Sport wins award from The Federation of Gay Games

The Federation of Gay Games (FGG) held its annual Volunteers of the Year Awards last month, which were co-hosted by Out to Sport, which acts as an umbrella for all LGBTQ+ sports groups across London and the South East.

The FGG awards, which this year took place online, recognise those who have made significant contributions to LGBTQ+ communities and helps FGG further its mission of promoting equality and inclusion through sport and culture.

“We love to recognise those who help our communities, it’s important to let them know their work is valued by so many others than the ones they are working directly with,” says Shiv Paul, officer of communications for FGG.

The FGG also awarded: Volunteer of the Year - Shamey Cramer; Volunteer of the Year - Sarah Townsend; LGBTQ+ Sports Media 2020 Award - Jon Holmes.

Trans Can Sport, a not-for-profit based in Brighton & Hove that aims to get trans people into exercise and healthy living, received the award for Outstanding Contribution to Trans Sport Participation. Trans Can Sport group has been providing free and low-cost activities to trans and non-binary people in Brighton & Hove since 2016.

The FGG organises the Gay Games, which are an international sporting and cultural event held every four years. The next instalment takes place in Hong Kong in November 2022.

For more info on the Gay Games, visit: www.gaygames.org
For more info on Out for Sport, visit: www.outforsport.com/
For more info on Trans Can Sport, visit: www.transcansport.co.uk
For more info on Out to Swim, visit: www.outtoswim.org

The Ivan Bussens Award for Outstanding Lifetime Achievement went to Stephen Adshead from Out to Swim, which has branches in London and Brighton. The judges were blown away by Stephen’s tireless work fighting for men to be able to compete in synchronised swimming—a sport that until recently excluded men from competition completely.

Goal Diggers FC was acknowledged for its excellence as Club of the Year. The club impressed judges with its efforts over the past year to provide opportunities for women and non-binary people to play football.

Charlton Invicta FC received the award for Most Innovative Lockdown Initiative. Their involvement in the Football v Transphobia campaign brought the team together virtually to raise awareness about transphobia in sport.

The Club Spirit Award was given to Steph Ramsey from Out to Swim, and Ella Slade from London Royals Hockey Club. This year two awards were given to celebrate spirit across different genders and to be recognised as role models for their positive attitude towards participation in sport.

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Terrence Higgins Trust announce series of Work & Skills webinars

MindOut announces new advocacy workshops for LGBTQ+ over 50s

MindOut, the LGBTQ+ mental health charity, has announced a series of Advocacy Workshops for LGBTQ+ people aged 50+ with a workshop on Assertiveness taking place on Thursday, February 25 from 1-3pm. Facilitated by Karen Dresback, 50+ project advocacy worker, and Dawn Hayes, 50+ project leader, the workshops are available to any LGBTQ+ people who identify as LGBTQ+, plus any MindOut service users, volunteers, staff, and trustees aged 50+. To sign up for a workshop, email info@mindout.org.uk or call 01273 234839

For a list of future workshops, visit: www.mindout.org.uk/lgbtq-over-50s-advocacy-workshops/

Switchboard welcomes new development worker for Rainbow Café dementia project

Switchboard support groups in Feb

There is also a Facebook group for LGBTQ+ people with disabilities which provides another avenue for support and community.

To join, visit: www.facebook.com/groups/LGBTQDisabledGroup

www.switchboard.org.uk/

The Clare Project service update

The LGBTQ+ Disability Group is a peer support group for LGBTQ+ disabled and neurodiverse people who live in and around Brighton & Hove.

The group meets fortnightly on Zoom on Wednesdays from 2.30–4pm, and is facilitated by a queer disabled person. The group will be meeting next on Wednesday, February 3.

If you’re interested, email disability.project@switchboard.org.uk
jący the LGBTQ+ in team

Kurt Matthews, BLAGSS’ treasurer and men’s football co-ordinator, on why BLAGSS football is inclusive, friendly and confidence boosting

Back in 2013 we started out with a small group of players training in mixed sessions inside a sports hall and since then we have grown to now have separate men’s and women’s outdoor sessions, both regularly attended by other 14 players each week. We train every Thursday, when Covid restrictions allow, on the 3G astro turf pitch at the Manor Gym in Kemptown. The men train from 6–7.30pm and the women train from 7.30–9pm. Both sessions are mixed in terms of ability and age group and are aimed at having fun. We start with a warm-up session and then move on to a small-sided game.

Both teams regularly play in friendlies and competitions against other local teams (from five-a-side to 11-a-side), including an annual Football vs Homophobia game versus Sussex FA at their headquarters in Lancing. All of these games put participation above competitiveness, although we will always try our best in the games we play.

For the first time last year the men’s team entered the nationwide Gay Football Supporters’ Network (GFSN) 11-a-side League playing home games against teams Bristol, Leicester and Cardiff and away games in London and Leeds, all followed by the customary social event where everyone from both teams mixes in a friendly social environment, often with a beverage or two. Unfortunately, the season was cut short in March just after we had defeated London Leftfooters 2-0 in the first leg of our play-off. We look forward to getting back into the league when it is safe to do so.

The football team is great to be part of as it allows like-minded LGBTQ+ people to play football in an inclusive, friendly, confidence-boosting environment. The social side is also fantastic with regular social events and interaction between all members of the team, a lot of long-lasting friendships and relationships have been formed over a common love for football.

If you would like to find out more, please visit the BLAGSS website at www.blagss.org.

Thanks for reading and stay safe.

Kingsway Care is a modern home-care provider, headquartered in Hove and supporting senior clients across Sussex. We provide a range of high-quality services to enable independent living at home.

These services include:

**HOME CARE**
- Companionship
- Personal Care
- Respite Care
- Emergency Care
- Dementia Care
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A series of provocative comment pieces by Craig Hanlon-Smith and Jason Reid.

You've Never Had It So Good  
By Craig Hanlon-Smith

I avoided Netflix’ latest star-studded Ryan Murphy extravaganza The Prom, for no other reason than I was saving it for Christmas. It’s not as though there would be any parties on the horizon to occupy my time through the festive lockdown. I had every intention of getting there eventually, after all a mainstream broadcast with a young lesbian at the centre of the story is such a rare event that would be worth the time investment alone. Meryl Streep, Nicole Kidman and Tracey Ullman on the cast list, a useful bonus.

The trouble with adding such a TV event to my list for later, is... well... gay people. Every Mary with a smart phone has used all conceivable forms of social media at their fingertips to offer their own thoughts on the programme within the first 24 hours of its release. Gays with opinions and iPhones is its own pandemic with hugely irritating consequences. God forbid you might not want to watch UK Drag Race on a Thursday evening. You have little chance of not knowing the result of the latest elimination prior to watching unless of course you avoid each and every app for days. Notice how on BBC News right before the sport, the announcer says to anyone playing catch up “those who do not wish to know the result look away now”? Perhaps Twitter and Facebook should worry less about blocking Donald Trump and provide warnings for all homo posts related to RuPaul content. Give me a frickin’ break guys.

Such was the case with The Prom. I had been given detailed amateur reviews of James Corden’s performance as a Broadway homo-show-queen countless times. These reviews on the whole lacked nuance or anything one might describe as subtle but then, with only 280 characters, Twitter encourages us to be blunt. The comments ranged from the more general “he’s awful” through “his performance is offensive” to “who does he think he is?”. “Corden will take that story to a bigger audience.... It’s not relevant that he’s not gay. Some actors are straight, get over it”

He is, of course, James Corden, nothing short on an international superstar and jealously is always ugly even when you’re shouting in 280 characters. OK – I get it, blah blah he’s not gay blah blah. The part could have gone to a gay actor blah blah, yes we know. And it isn’t that I disagree with that as a concept. Let us celebrate the LGBTQ+ cast of Russell T Davies’ new AIDS drama It’s A Sin and the apparently cruelly Emmy ignored trans cast of Pose.

Not cruelly really, some of them are not great actors. For me the point is they are trans actors playing trans parts, if that compromises on the best performances on television, then that’s the point, right?

“I thought The Prom was overall a bit meh. And yet I felt uplifted at the idea that somewhere a teenage lesbian is watching this and feeling better about herself”

James Corden is Marmite. Some people love him, some do not. I confess to being a little ‘meh’ but the guy’s a star. He has a chat show in the US which is watched by millions. His Carpool Karaoke pulls in the biggest hitters, we’re talking Adele, Mariah, Celine, Madonna. He is an enormous deal in the States and high-profile Netflix releases are an equally massive event for its 200 million subscribers. I am not here to judge the quality of Corden’s acting in The Prom, I thought it was OK, a bit cheesy and ham-fisted at times, but I thought that about the whole thing. That isn’t the point.

Corden’s fan base will watch that show, there are 75 million Netflix subscribers in the US alone and some of them will now have been introduced to a story with a young lesbian as the central protagonist. A young lesbian who challenges the PTA of her school to be allowed to attend the prom with her girlfriend. Corden plays a 40-year-old gay man whose family turfed him out (it’s more complicated than that – watch it) and he unexpectedly has a long-awaited meeting with his mother (Tracey Ullman) in the latter part of the film. It is an important story to tell and one many in our community share. Corden in the role will take that story to a bigger audience. He is therefore the right man to cast in the role. It’s not relevant that he’s not gay. Some actors are straight, get over it.

We have also never had it so good. I thought The Prom was overall a bit meh. And yet I felt uplifted at the idea that somewhere a teenage lesbian is watching this and feeling better about herself. Another is seeing a version of herself on a television subscription service supported by hundreds of millions all over the world. What’s not amazing about that? I grew up with no representation in the media, who were my role models? Where were the stories of gay me being in love at 17? In a show that is about young with no representation in the media, who were my role models? Where were the stories of gay me being in love at 17? In a show that is nothing more than a joyous musical explosion of love and acceptance? A gay show where no-one had AIDS, no-one was sexually abused as a teenager, the central character was not recovering from drug and alcohol abuse. Sure, along with Corden she was rejected by her mother (this was a theme in The Prom) and, spoiler alert in case you’ve not seen it, I shan’t tell you if there’s a happy ending, but hey, it is a musical – you may guess.

So up yours twitterati and your Corden-hating focus. What a shame none of you recognised this was a lesbian story on mainstream international television with a positive twist. You’ve never had it so good.

Have Your Say: Email your thoughts to info@gscene.com or join the Facebook discussion @Gscene.Brighton
NOT TO BE TRUSTED

By Jason Reid

Inexplicably many Tory supporters are of the opinion that Liz Truss, secretary of state for international trade AND minister for women & equalities, is one of the stars of the current cabinet; a future prime minister some have mused. The bar is most certainly unprecedentedly low, so they may well be right.

If you’re not familiar with Truss’s colourful back catalogue of ‘achievements’: In 2010, shortly after being elected as an MP she was – alongside Priti Patel, Dominic Raab and Kwasi Kwarteng – one of the authors of Britannia Unchained, a book that called for the scrapping of workers’ rights and claimed that ‘the British are among the worst idlers in the world’.

Those who follow politics closely will also remember the 2018 Conservative Party conference when Truss – then environment secretary – delivered an agonising and deadpan speech which clearly sounded much funnier in her head due to the inane grinning and anomalous presentation style. The moment she stared directly into the camera and said: “We… an anomalous presentation style. The moment she stared directly into the camera and said: “We… an anomalous presentation style. The moment she stared directly into the camera and said: “We… an anomalous presentation style. The moment she stared directly into the camera and said: “We…”

Then there’s the litany of car crash media interviews – Truss seems to always be totally unprepared and unbothered with being exposed as a hard-hearted chancer. Where’s the accountability? She’s been permitted to saunter from one shambling clusterfuck of failings to the next, with ease. Remind you of anyone?

Seemingly this government is aiming for all-time lows; how else can one explain Truss’s most recent speech at the Centre of Policy Studies entitled ‘The New Fight For Fairness’ – a war on the ‘woke left’ – in which she said that Boris Johnson’s government would move away from fighting against ‘protected characteristics’ such as gender, religion or ethnicity, and instead focus on fixing ‘geographical inequalities’.

“It seems Truss is quite plainly saying that she thinks the concerns of trans and non-binary people amount to little more than, in her own words, ‘fashion’”

Translation: Liz Truss will fight for those who Liz Truss and her right wing government of elites deems worthy.

That should sound alarm bells across the LGBTQ+ community and beyond.

Of course, first and foremost they will be fighting for their mates in big business; bunging private contracts their way and profiteering from the most vulnerable in society – we see them, even if some in the media choose not to.

Truss then went on to say: “To make society more equal we need the equality debate to be led by facts not fashion.”

By choosing to use the term ‘fashion’ in this context, Truss reveals her true disdain for lived homophobia, transphobia and racism. Taking cheap shots demeanes the daily fight many in minority groups still face.

Oh it’s just a phase, a fad. Get over it. We don’t experience this. We’re okay. This statement is also a dog whistle to the true blue Tory supporter and those far right idiots who blather incessantly about the imaginary ‘woke brigade’ and ‘assault on free speech’ – they couldn’t give a rat’s ass about trans and non-binary people’s concerns.

By striking such a tone, and purposely choosing derogatory language, it seems Truss is quite plainly saying that she thinks the concerns of trans and non-binary people amount to little more than, in her own words, “fashion”.

Fashion comes and goes. It is disposable. This rhetoric is abhorrent and mirrors the othering gay people faced during past decades of Tory rule. Rinse and repeat.

As a community we must not allow them to normalise this thinking. The fight really is on. Trans and non-binary people need the support of cisgender people now more ever. Not just wishy-washy liberal slogans on social media when Trans Awareness Week rolls round, but vocal advocacy with your full chest, 365 days a year.

In another part of the speech, Truss talks suspiciously of “the left failing to defend single sex spaces” – which is an anti-trans talking point that has been discussed extensively over the past few years. This time the dog whistle was deafening. She knew what she was doing, make no mistake about that.

If I didn’t know the person behind this speech I would think it was delivered by someone who has never faced an iota of discrimination in their life, someone who would seemingly rather gawp at a computer full of statistics for hours on end than into the eyes of a victim for even a minute.

As humorous as it is to see risible politicians repeatedly making fools of themselves, what we need to remember is that people in power like Truss and her backers are a real danger – just like Trump was in America; who, incidentally, was cheered on enthusiastically by the Tory Party.

As with the majority of the current cabinet, Truss’s record speaks for itself – incompetence personified, but somehow she is where she is, we are where we are, and the ruling far right government holds a sizeable majority in parliament. And for that reason, we must watch them like hawks.

Queer pioneers fought hard for the rights we have today, and those rights should never be taken for granted; as the UK lurches ever further to the dark recesses of the far right, complacency can never be an option.

It’s imperative that the LGBTQ+ community is united – all of us shoulder to shoulder – at this critical time. Standing up for those who have stood up for us.

Have Your Say: Email your response to info@gscene.com or Facebook @Gscene. Brighton
What’s next for gay saunas?

By Jason Reid

I love going to a gay sauna. Always have done, probably always will do. If you’ve never been, the best way I can describe it is: when you walk through the doors it’s very freeing, like you’re leaving all worries outside and stepping into a mysterious and licentious world, a much-needed escape, and... release.

Saunas are intrinsically unique to gay culture and history and it breaks my heart that they’ve been closing down across the UK over the past few years.

My first visit to one was when I moved to London in 2001, and it was mind-blowing. I was finding stray pages of Razzle in the bushes and sneaking them home for wank material.

Chariots Liverpool Street was the gay sauna of the ’90s/’00s, always busy – especially so on Saturday nights/Sunday afternoons. I vividly remember the layout, over three floors, to this day: two steam rooms that someone was always instilling before disappearing into private rooms.

Something that I’m always surprised hasn’t changed over the years, is the mere mention of a sauna often elicits a reaction of repulsion in some gay circles. Ironically, I’ve witnessed guys in bars slagging off saunas with the sneer of a vicious homophobe and then seen them in a sauna steam room on all fours having the time of their life on another occasion.

“Once we’re all vaccinated, safe in the knowledge that we can fuck like rabbits again, I wonder if saunas will experience a glorious revival”

I fully understand that this all goes back to the pearl-clutching shame I’ve spoken about previously. It’s just sex. Everyone does it. And whether you’re doing it at home on a Silentnight bed or in a dark room strapped to a wall – cheeky wanks under the bubbles, a swimming pool and social area; the raw sexual heat heavy in the air as guys would walk round cruising each other insatiably before disappearing into private rooms.

Maybe it’s time to relax the strict ‘men only’ rule? Allow respectful allies through the doors as well. Or call them queer saunas? They just need tweaking somewhat to reflect the times. They should maximise their social aspect too.

I’ll never forget the time I sneaked my drag king friend, out of drag obvs, into a well-known London gay sauna late one night – obviously the staff told my friend to leave when they discovered them. But we weren’t doing any harm, we paid our entry fee like everyone else and just wanted to carry on hanging out for a bit. I honestly think most people wouldn’t care; from my experience of saunas, removing ‘men only’ rules might even help to shatter some of that ingrained misogyny that’s still (can you believe?!) so prevalent.

What even is gender these days? Just a concept that psychologically crushes us, so many people are fluid anyway. The queers of 2021 are very different to the gays of 2001 – and I feel like gay saunas haven’t changed at all in that time.

Every business has to adapt from time to time in order to stay afloat. Perhaps that’s why so many saunas have been closing.

Who knows what the defining answer is to the survival of gay saunas? I’m just spitballing here because I hold them dear, they’ve been part of my life for 20 years, and I want them to be part of our queer future not just the past.

I’ve also been thinking about how gay saunas will fit into a post-pandemic, progressive queer world.

Sauna snobbery should’ve been ditched long ago, it’s incredibly tedious and naff.

Of course, all the gay saunas are currently closed due to Covid-19. But once we’re all vaccinated, safe in the knowledge that we can fuck like rabbits again, I wonder if saunas will experience a glorious revival. Many social commentators have written about the likelihood of another roaring ‘20s. Bars and clubs bustling with people gagging to live every moment after being cooped up for too long, sex-starved and craving hedonism.

So could we see saunas that were floundering pre-Covid once again overflowing with horned up queens piling into steam rooms, frantic hot sweaty fucking in every nook and cranny?

I really hope so. We deserve it for being so good during this hellish pandemic.

Bring on the sauna and sex club boom, I’m all for it, and would invest if I had any bloody money.

Have Your Say: Email your response to info@gscene.com or Facebook @Gscene.

Brighton
The past year has taught us a lot: the value of our relationships, what our passions are, and most importantly, that good health is precious.

‘Testing is key’ – we’ve heard it countless times recently, whether at government press conferences, on social media or in the news. Knowing your status is crucial for making informed decisions about what to do next.

This message doesn’t only apply to Covid-19, though. National HIV Testing Week starts on Monday, February 1, and there’s never been a better time to test for HIV – especially for groups most impacted, including gay and bisexual men. We have the opportunity to end two pandemics in the coming years, all through testing.

This year, you can order a free postal HIV testing kit straight to your front door via www.startswithme.org.uk. You have the opportunity to know your status from the safety (and comfort) of your own home – it can’t get much easier than that.

But why should I get tested?

HIV diagnoses in gay and bisexual men fell by 18% in 2019, which is the biggest drop seen in any group. Reading that statistic, you might be thinking, ‘Great! Job done!’ – but we’re not there yet.

In fact, gay and bisexual men are still the group most affected by HIV in the UK:

• Gay and bisexual men accounted for almost half of all people in the UK receiving treatment for HIV.

• In the latest stats, 35% of new HIV diagnoses among us came late – which is after damage to the immune system has already begun. Starting effective treatment earlier also means the virus will be more quickly suppressed and can’t be passed on to partners.

• Six per cent of gay and bisexual men living with HIV in the UK don’t even know they have it, which is bad for their health and also means HIV might be unwittingly passed on.

The report’s core recommendation? You guessed it – increase HIV testing.

While we want to see everyone offered an HIV test whenever they interact with our healthcare systems – no matter their gender, ethnicity or sexuality – you can play your part in making HIV testing the norm, both within the LGBTQ+ community and outside of it. It starts with you.

Diagnoses in gay and bisexual men may be declining, but we can’t let this momentum slow down if we’re going to make England HIV-free by 2030. The more people test, the less stigma attached to HIV testing, and the closer we get to stopping new cases.

Give HIV the finger this National HIV Testing Week. A simple finger-prick test is all it takes.

Services in Brighton

Due to the Covid-19 pandemic, the THT team in Brighton & Hove are unfortunately unable to provide their full health promotion services at this time. But we are getting creative with what we offer digitally.

We’re currently offering free condom packs for those living in BN1, BN2 and BN3 postcodes in the Brighton & Hove area. While we encourage everyone to practise social distancing and discourage sexual activity with new partners outside their immediate household, we’re making these condoms available so you can have safe, healthy sex.

To order these condoms, you must be aged 18 or over, and either be:

• A man who has sex with men

• Trans or non-binary

• A sex worker

• Of black African or of black minority ethnicity

Additionally, while the Brighton in-person HIV testing clinic is currently closed due to lockdown, we are offering free HIV fast tests for Brighton & Hove residents to order via www.tht.org.uk/brighton
Not On My Watch

As the Old Police Cells Museum launches a series of short talks aimed at tackling domestic violence during Covid, volunteer Zoe Sutherland-Rowe reveals how she researched Queer Suffragettes: Censorship and Opposing the Law

"My favourite is a poster that depicts two women kissing, with the caption ‘Girls are doing all the fellows’ jobs now!’ Over the last year I’ve seen this poster reclaimed by fellow Sapphics across social media, and it was this that inspired me to create my film"

My research project on lesbian and bisexual suffragettes will be one of six films about strong women in Sussex’s history:

Queer Suffragettes: Censorship and Opposing the Law

Anti-suffragette propaganda posters from the early 1900s painted women’s rights activists as ‘ugly’ or ‘wild’, with some intended to shock and anger their audience by showing what Britain would look like if they succeeded. In this ‘dystopian’ world men would have to share in the carrying out of household chores and even help to look after their own children (the horror!). However my favourite is a poster that depicts two women kissing, with the caption Girls are doing all the fellows’ jobs now! Over
the last year I’ve seen this poster reclaimed by fellow Sapphics across social media, and it was this that inspired me to create my film.

Being intrigued by the poster, I searched for any evidence of queerness within the suffragette movement, using something that portrayed it as negative as a springboard to unearth the often glossed-over historical evidence that there were queer women at the heart of the movement. As I excitedly began to explore this idea I pretty quickly hit a brick wall. As a bisexual woman myself I am in no way unaccustomed to queer erasure in TV shows, books, films, and in my own personal life; but in the context of pre-Stonewall history this erasure, and often censorship, was on a whole different scale. Though sexual acts between women have never been illegal in Britain, their broad acceptance from society as a whole is recent, and so we don’t have court documents detailing queerness of women as evidence for crimes, and we don’t have much literature exploring queer female experiences (often the little evidence we have comes from personal diaries). What I mean to say by this is that though queer women have always existed, their stories have not always been told.

“When trying to learn about LGBTQ+ history we meet the frustrating truth that queer stories and experiences are often erased”

However, I am very pleased to say that I do have some stories to tell you. Ethel Smyth was a women’s rights activist and classical composer born in 1858. Smyth’s work was integral to the suffragette movement, using something that portrayed it as negative as a springboard to unearth the often glossed-over historical evidence that there were queer women at the heart of the movement. As I excitedly began to explore this idea I pretty quickly hit a brick wall. As a bisexual woman myself I am in no way unaccustomed to queer erasure in TV shows, books, films, and in my own personal life; but in the context of pre-Stonewall history this erasure, and often censorship, was on a whole different scale. Though sexual acts between women have never been illegal in Britain, their broad acceptance from society as a whole is recent, and so we don’t have court documents detailing queerness of women as evidence for crimes, and we don’t have much literature exploring queer female experiences (often the little evidence we have comes from personal diaries). What I mean to say by this is that though queer women have always existed, their stories have not always been told.

“As a bisexual woman myself I am in no way unaccustomed to queer erasure in TV shows, books, films, and in my own personal life; but in the context of pre-Stonewall history this erasure, and often censorship, was on a whole different scale”

I hope that this dive into the topic of my film has given you a flavour of what will be coming from our museum over the coming months. The other films written by our volunteers will cover a broad range of female experiences concerning the police, including Christiana Edmunds: the Chocolate Cream Killer, Pioneers of the Petticoat Patrol, Mary Hare (1866-1945), and 100 Years of Women Policing in Sussex.

“New LGBT+ volunteers are welcome and encouraged to join the museum’s team. Email opcmbrighton@gmail.com if you are interested in finding out more.”

For more info on OPCM, visit: www.oldpolicecellsmuseum.org.uk

Not On My Watch is a series of free short talks (with cake) about strong women in the past - including the serial chocolate poisoner and lesbian suffragettes – by the Old Police Cells Museum (OPCM) aimed at victims of domestic violence.

One of the morning teas is specifically aimed at LGBTQ+ victims and the museum says: “Ultimately, the aim is to increase awareness of domestic violence issues within our local queer community (particularly due to the current spike resulting from Covid) and the way that being aware of queer history in our city can be a form of empowerment.”

The invitation to local groups adds: “We’re pleased to invite you to a series of short talks about strong women in Sussex’s history who have been in the police – or in the hands of the police.

“You’ll hear the story of Mary Hare, whose work as a deaf community advocate equipped her to become the first women’s police officer in Sussex (it was a bumpy ride). You’ll be chilled by the criminal mastermind Christiana Edmunds, Brighton’s notorious serial chocolate poisoner... And be inspired by the brave escapades of local lesbian suffragette herstory... And more!”

All produced by museum volunteers, the six half-hour talks can also be accompanied by free organic vegan cake delivered to each community address for groups to enjoy with a cup of tea.

The talks are pre-recorded and downloadable from the OPCM website throughout February – further details, including where to find the films and how to book your cake, from opcmbrighton@gmail.com.

Funding from the Coronavirus Community Support Fund, distributed by the National Lottery Community Fund, has helped to deliver these talks and morning teas.
Despite February being LGBTQ+ History Month, bi+ culture and prominent bisexual, pansexual and queer figures are often left out of the conversation, with bi+ erasure continuing to be one of the most pressing issues within the LGBTQ+ community. The term bisexuality wasn't coined until 1892, making it one of the later LGBTQ+ labels to have been introduced into public discourse, perhaps contributing to the lack of historical bi+ visibility. A handful of bi+ historical figures were not open about their sexuality during their lifetime due to stigmas around same-sex relationships, and their orientation only became public knowledge after contemporary findings about their lives.

Even those who were openly queer have often had their bisexuality erased from historical discourses, with GLAAD theorising that erasure occurs when ‘existence of one’s identity is questioned or denied outright’. With gay and straight historically being thought of as the only two valid sexual possibilities (known as monosexism), and many queer historical figures being married to a member of the opposite sex (as seen with some of the women here), the legitimacy of bisexuality was, and continues to be questioned. Mel Reeve, an archivist and writer who runs Bi History UK, speaks to us about the lack of historical documentation of the bi+ community:

"Bi History was created because of concerns that I had about a lack of bi+ representation in LGBTQ+ history. When I began research, I found that this wasn’t because of a lack of bi+ activists, groups, and people but because of erasure of those lives and that work. I'm an archivist, and in my work with LGBTQ+ archive materials although I've seen a lot of amazing representations of bi+ lives and activism, and of hard work to be inclusive and to represent bi+ history. I've also seen how records of bisexuality are not being gathered and preserved which are vital to preserving our knowledge of our community's history."

Mel continues: "I’ve also seen examples of content being described as LGBTQ+ but without any bi+ representation, which is always really disappointing. I think this happens for several reasons, among which is a perception that experiencing attraction to the people of the same and of different genders, or to all genders, is somehow more modern than any other identity. I think it also happens because there has historically been so much erasure of bisexual narratives that it feels somehow harder to uncover them. There is also the practical concern of applying labels to historical figures, which is something I am very careful about in my work with Bi History. I never describe someone as bi+ if they have not used that word for themselves - however that doesn’t stop us being able to identify and celebrate people with experiences that modern bi+ people can understand as part of our history.”

They also highlight the importance of preserving bi+ history for today’s LGBTQ+ community, saying: “Having a knowledge of our community’s history can help bi+ people feel more confident in their identities and in their right to have a place within the LGBTQ+ community.”

Along with the bi+ community, women’s history has been subject to erasure. However, many influential, self-identifying women were part of the bi+ community and made history for their role in the fight for LGBTQ+ rights, and their work and legacy deserves to be acknowledged this month.

Marsha P. Johnson is best known for being a pivotal figure in the 1969 Stonewall riots, and identified as a bi+ trans woman. She grew up in a strictly religious home and was forced to suppress her identity until she moved to New York at 17 with only $15; it is there that Johnson became a much-loved figure in the LGBTQ+ community, despite being discriminated against for her race and gender identity.

She was a drag queen, performing with queer group Hot Peaches from 1972 to the early 1990s. Along with Sylvia Rivera, she also set up the STAR (Street Transvestite Action Revolutionaries) House in 1972, a sanctuary for homeless LGBTQ+ youth, particularly those who were gender diverse. She provided the residents with clothes, food and emotional support. To this day, Johnson is considered a major pioneer.
of the LGBTQ+ rights movement and her life has been commemorated in several memorials across New York.

1. Mexican artist Frida Kahlo, best known for her striking and vibrant self-portraits, was openly bi+, and explored issues of identity, gender, race and class in her work. She was married to fellow artist Diego Rivera who, like Kahlo, was an active member of the Communist Party, but was known to have relationships with men and women throughout her life. She was also known for her flexible gender presentation, and can be seen dressed in full male attire in a 1926 family photograph.

2. Josephine Baker was the first black woman to star in a major film, as well as being a cabaret star, a member of the French resistance, and part of the bi+ community - she was also known to have had relationships with Kahlo after the pair met in 1939. Born in St Louis, Baker experienced extreme racism throughout her early life and became involved with various black performance troupes when she was a teenager. Her big break came in 1922, when she featured in the musical Shuffle Along - one of the first all-black musicals on Broadway.

   Baker moved to France where she became a treasured performer and married industrialist Jean Lion, despite many rumours about her affairs with women. It is unclear if Baker was open about her sexual orientation during her lifetime, but she was known to be an advocate of equality, having performed to raise funds for France's International League Against Racism and Anti-Semitism. She is often thought of as the first black sex symbol of the 20th century and known for consistently using her platform to spread messages of hope to the oppressed, famously saying: “Try to understand and love each other before it is too late.”

3. Actress Marlene Dietrich has been referred to as the ‘bisexual anti-fascist’ by many, and was one of the most famous figures of her time, with her 1930 performance in The Blue Angel winning her international acclaim. After this, she featured in Hollywood film Morocco - the first movie of its kind to feature a lesbian kiss between Dietrich and another woman - and became the highest paid contemporary actress.

   She was often dressed in men’s suits, such as in Morocco, and was known to be in a relationship with famous Cuban lesbian playwright Mercedes de Acosta. She was also an outspoken political activist who actively opposed Hitler and the Nazi regime; the Nazi government even encouraged her to return to Germany from the US in order to silence her. However, she resisted, and continued to give anti-Nazi broadcasts and help people escape Germany if they were at risk of persecution. Her legacy as a queer icon and political activist continues to live on today as she features heavily in Axel Madsen’s book - The Sewing Circle: Hollywood’s Greatest Secret: Female Stars Who Loved Other Women.

Nowadays, there are many more bi+, pansexual and queer famous figures who are open about their sexuality, following these trailblazing historical women who paved the way for greater LGBTQ+ representation in the worlds of art, showbiz and politics. Representation continues to be one of the most important factors in combating biphobia and busting myths around bisexuality, alongside acknowledging the rich history of the bi+ community and the incredible feats so many bi+ people have achieved.
Celebrating LGBTQ+ History Month in Brighton & Hove

With the LGBTQ+ History Month 2021 theme being Body, Mind, Spirit, Brighton & Hove City Council LGBTQ+ Workers’ Forum has zeroed in on intersectionality and the importance of platforming other voices for its annual celebration of the event, which runs throughout February.

The two-pronged approach sees locally-based life coach Sam Adams bringing to life seven statements or single words that especially resonate with her in a series of 90-second online shorts, alongside a portrait exhibition entitled ‘Who do YOU think we are?’.

The exhibition will feature 33 portraits of LGBTQ+ people, which it is hoped will be framed in the main windows of Jubilee Library. However, if that is not possible due to the ongoing pandemic restrictions, a portrait will be released each day on the LGBTQ+ Workers’ Forum social media @LGBTQIWF.

The Forum says: “Selective documenting of history and culture has been a pervasive issue for centuries, and the stories of LGBTQ+ people of colour are notably underrepresented; not least within the LGBTQ+ community itself. To tell the story of LGBTQ+ activism, our triumphs and our tragedies, we should seek out and share these stories, as there is empowerment in representation.

“For decades I wasn’t really me, life didn’t look how I want it to be. But how can it when your lens is blurred when you smear it with lies and other people’s words”

“There is a lot to be learned from other parallel movements striving for equality. For many people, intersectionality is an appreciation that movements for equality and justice are more effective when they learn from one another and collaborate.”

The photo exhibition is aimed at giving “us an opportunity to see and also get scrutinised by the unblinking eyes of the subjects”, exploring ideas around age, ethnic background, gender identity, activism, trans lives and the Brighton & Hove & wider LGBTQ+ community.

Taking part in the exhibition are people from all walks of LGBTQ+ life, from 17 to 87 years old; from teenage musician to elder statesman. The inclusive photos are described as “a light-hearted examination of our diversity, and who we are in a changing world”.

“I grew up not knowing who I was, not seeing black faces or different races, no gay people.”

The Forum continues: “Asking people to think about who they think WE are? Raising awareness and emphasising that every single person has the right to experience any gender identity in freedom and that the public space belongs to all citizens. Gently highlighting the influences of our infinite variety of intersecting communities on each and every one of us.”

Segueing into the importance of the short films, the Forum says: “We remind ourselves that without our own writers writing our own stories, we get written out of history completely and Sam asks us directly this
Samantha "Sam" Adams takes part in the LGBTQ+ History Month project, reflecting on her experiences and the importance of self-awareness and self-acceptance. Through the project, she aims to inspire others by sharing her own journey of embracing her identity and overcoming challenges.

Sam's connection to the project originated from an idea for 2020 Pride month, which was unable to go ahead in its projected format. Sam had broadcast a Facebook Live segment talking about Black Lives Matter and her "experience of growing up in a white community and having a black mum".

Forum worker Shanni Collins – also an artist who illustrated the words used by Sam in the films – had seen the broadcast, along with thousands of others, been moved by it and felt Sam would be an inspiration to others. "I was asked to choose six to eight words and the focus was me because of intersectionality – black, female, gay. It’s about sharing things that are inspirational to me, giving some positive messages from my perspective on life."

"The thing with resilience is that generally speaking you gotta experience hurdles, trials, tribulations and challenges to build it" Sam was also asked to come up with a sentence to support each of her chosen words and phrases, all of them ending with her trademark call to action: "It starts with you."

While filming taking place all around Brighton & Hove, the shorts feature some of the city's best-known areas, with Sam holding Shanni’s illustrative homages to her words – Identity, Privilege, Be Real, Self-Awareness, Responsibility, Resilience and Intersectionality – while she delivers her messages.

The films will be released on the LGBTQ+ Workers' Forum feed throughout the month accompanied by links for further reading, research or ways to learn more about the subjects covered. Once all the films have been shared, all seven will be available on the Brighton & Hove City Council website and Sam’s own website: www.sam-adams.com

She says when she was initially asked to get involved in the project she wondered: "Why me? I’m sure there are plenty of other gay black females out there you can talk to." But ultimately she really enjoyed doing it and is proud of the whole enterprise.

So what does she hope will come of her participation in this LGBTQ+ History Month focus?

"[Intersectionality] means I’m less likely to earn as much as others, be heard as much as others, be given the same opportunities as others"

"There are two things. I want people to have that self-awareness of who they are. Being the real you is the way to be happy and fulfilled. I want to get people to tap into that a lot quicker."

"The second thing is about healing. I have healed all my hurts. We are where we are because of what we have been through previously and often it’s a bit of a repair job – even doing this project has helped me."

The films will be released on the LGBTQ+ Workers' Forum Twitter feed throughout the month accompanied by links for further reading, research or ways to learn more about the subjects covered. Once all the films have been shared, all seven will be available on the Brighton & Hove City Council website and Sam's own website: www.sam-adams.com
THE ‘MAGIC’ FARM
Alf Le Flohic heads back to the Eighties to uncover the story behind an unusual rural Kentish hangout

The farmer in question was Tim Day, and it was his farm, Hazelpits, nestled on the edge of the quiet village of Headcorn in the Kent countryside, that became the stuff of legend from the late 1970s to the mid 1980s. Literally hundreds of people would flock there from June to September, mainly from London and the south coast, but “at their peak, there were even people flying in from Canada and South Africa” (Rob Flood).

The MAGIC in this instance refers to the Medway Area Gay Independent Community, an organisation that grew out of Medway CHE (Campaign for Homosexual Equality) around 1977.

But back to Tim. His lover at this time, because I’m sure you’re wondering, was 25-year-old Bombardier John Bruce of the 94th Locating Regiment, Royal Artillery. Tim began to hold a disco or two at the farm and soon MAGIC was helping him run them.

Before we go there, we need to remember that this was still early days for the UK’s lesbian and gay community (using the terminology of the period). There was obviously no internet or apps to help you meet people, so every community newspaper, every switchboard phoneline or gay night in a straight pub, was a lifeline to isolated individuals.

“I’m wandering around at this disco, round these bloody darkened outhouses, hearing all manner of groans and moans and slaps and screams and stuff like that, and thinking what the hell is going on”

A 19-year-old “dreadfully single” Aleck Dalrymple had been in the RAF for three years, but found himself “unceremoniously removed having admitted to my homosexuality”. He and a couple of friends made their way to Hazelpits around 1978 when they were living in Margate.

“One girl was a policewoman and the other girl was a bus driver for East Kent Buses. They were together, they were already in a relationship. And they had a vehicle so they drove us. You couldn’t get a bus or a train ‘cause it was seemingly in the middle of nowhere.

“I had these jeans that were so tight it was just ridiculous, and I went commando. On our way to the event we went to this pub and I went to the loo and my zip burst. So then we had to try to get me relatively decent with a few safety pins and God knows what else.

“I’ve got this skin-tight shirt, you know with some huge great collar on it. A very tight denim waistcoat, light blue. And I had an afro and of course the moustache. I had the Tom Selleck moustache.

“What I remember is arriving there, not having seen this many gay people in one place. It seemed hundreds but it probably was only about 50.

“The disco itself was in a barn building. There’s all this farm equipment around and the DJ is set up in the corner. The music was great...and current, and you know from America. Never Can Say Goodbye I think was a big one of hers [Gloria Gaynor], you used to get up there and just throw yourself around like there’s no tomorrow. Spinning with gay abandon for want of a better phrase.

“So I’m wandering around at this disco, round these bloody darkened outhouses, hearing all manner of groans and moans and slaps and screams and stuff like that, and thinking what the hell is going on. I thought people were being murdered! All in the name of gratification.”

A couple of years later, 28-year-old Trevor Winter became rather a regular at the farm.

“Well, that was before I came to Brighton. I had a boyfriend, Dennis, and we moved to Sevenoaks and had friends in Kent.

“Hazelpits Farm was brilliant. It was very mixed. It was like a big event, Saturday night, everyone excited about it, dressed up. It was quite unusual ‘cause it was a few hundred people there sometimes.

“We parked in a big field, walked across the farm and the big barn was the disco. A disco and a bar there, then there was the hayloft that you could walk across to, things were going on in there, and then you could go around the corner and there was a gate that you could climb over, and you could go to the fields beyond where more things were going on...

“I had a few little rough and tumbles in the hayloft, which were quite fun. I do remember quite a few lesbian fights there. You know, jealous rivalry of girlfriends sort of things.

“It was so nice the way it was set out. People walked around in the summer, people would be outside drinking and smoking and that. Really, really nice sociable thing to do, because there wasn’t a lot else to do at those times.”

Unfortunately, things were not so rosy for Tim’s army lover, John Bruce, at this point. He found himself being questioned about being gay and he bravely refused to deny it. So, he was imprisoned where he was stationed in Germany, before being court-martialed and dismissed from the forces.

John’s later partner in Brighton, Alan Spink, remembers seeing his warrant book: “They got
this red biro with a ruler and drew these lines diagonally, all across his record, and between the lines they wrote Dismissed With Disgrace.”

Back in Kent, MAGIC kept the discos going. An early attendee, Peter, recalls: “It was a Jacobean farmhouse. It had an RHS garden that was open to the public. It was quite an idyllic setting really. I mean quite amazing to think down on the Weald of Kent you had hundreds of queens dancing and roaming about.

“Some people went in drag, there was a bit of trans going on, I think there were some BME members of the community. In an old oast house they set up a bar, provided by Vic and Brenda, the licensees of the City Arms in Rochester.

“It was quite an idyllic setting really. I mean quite amazing to think down on the Weald of Kent you had hundreds of queens dancing and roaming about”

“One on very balmy summer evening, I’d met up with this guy, Colin from Gravesend, and we’d found ourselves towards the end of the evening at the top of the hay loft. It was like a Dutch barn. It must have had a corrugated roof because... suddenly there was this almighty electric storm. All these people that thought they were in the dark and quite safe were lit up by these mega lightning flashes, and then the rain on the roof was absolutely deafening. Derek Arrowsmith, the DJ, used to play Elgar’s Pomp and Circumstance to wind it up. So there were often coaches broke down in the middle of the village about 6 or 7 o’clock on this autumn evening. Evidently it was a coach of leather queens and when they got out to push the coach there is about 30 or 40 scantily clad men, in thongs or leather, just standing in the middle of the village.”

The leather contingent at Hazelpits may have been down to John Bruce’s interest in such things. Around 1984 he moved on from Tim and the farm, began a relationship with Alain Spink and joined Brighton’s gay Motor Sports Club (MSC). the Sussex Lancers.

Unsurprisingly the Lancers soon joined in the fun at the farm. According to their summer newsletters of 1985: “Bar opens from about 8pm till 1am and entry costs about £2. Plenty of facilities for parking and taking the evening air.” And the report back? “A resounding success and the chill breeze did not seem to deter us from tasting the various attractions on offer!”

“The world descended on it, and there were 500 or 600 people there. All shapes, sizes, sexes and everything else”

Lancers and partners Nigel Wilkins and Hugh Owens attended a number of times over the years. Nigel remembers: “MSC London got to hear of this and they used to go on a camping weekend and stay in the orchard.

“We would hire a minibus and drive through Sussex picking up the Lancers... have a wonderful evening and then of course drive back. Now you’d have to have all sorts of safety registrations to be able to drive a minibus full of screaming drunk poofs, but there we are.”

Hugh recalls: “The world descended on it, and there were 500 or 600 people there. All shapes, sizes, sexes and everything else. So I used to go over there, Nigel would sometimes accompany me, depending on his duties at the hospital. One fateful Saturday he did accompany me…"

As Nigel remembers it: “It was a nice moonlit night. I left the disco and went walking around the farm, and there were lots of guys cruising around in the fields and I met this guy…"

Eventually we noticed that the music from the disco had stopped, and that the lights had gone out on the farm. So we went back and Hugh was stood in the carpark leaning against his car, with his arms folded, fuming. And he just said, ‘Oh! There you are!’

“I had to make a decision, so I left Hugh. There’s a special tree at Headcorn under which I met my man (Geoff), and that’s where Mr Lovelychops came from.”

By this point Andrew Crowther-Walker was dating Tim Day and had moved on to the farm. He remembers the discos as being very much ahead of their time, as well as the time that Tim allowed some gay naturist bikers to stay in the field next door to Hazelpits: “His mother always used to come over on a Sunday morning to collect the milk and there they were, playing nudes leapfrog in the field.”

Sadly the Hazelpits farm discos became a victim of their own success as MAGIC organiser Bill recalls: “It started just as a small affair and then got so big we had to end it. Because, you know, it was getting scandalous.”

Talking of scandal, there is a tale about a slight young man known as Jan on the bonnet of a Morris Minor, but sadly there isn’t room to go into the details here…

Tim died of AIDS in 1991 aged 46. John died of AIDS in 1993 aged 40. Memories of those farm parties live on though, in Kent’s queer folklore and those lucky enough to be able to say: “I was there”.

Many thanks to Rob Flood for his interview with Bill and other related information.
Reflections on Vaccines

Rory Finn talks to Dr Sam Hall for some clarification around the Covid-19 vaccines

When news first came out that a vaccine had been approved, I initially greeted it with scepticism. Not because I am an anti-vaxxer or believe that 5G has been the cause of the pandemic. But because throughout medical history, minority groups have been sidelined in research, often an afterthought or not included at all. Some have been subjected to unethical and immoral clinical trials – this has been especially prevalent with people of colour. Given the speed at which the vaccines have been developed, why should we so trust them, as queer people, especially for those of us who wear multiple minority identities or live with long-term health conditions?

The good news is that people living with HIV have been included in the trials. When it comes to the vaccine, the dose doesn’t vary according to age or any other demographic factor. This is reassuring to me, that we will all get the same medicine, regardless of who we are, our age, our ethnicity or gender.

“Why should we so trust [vaccines], as queer people, especially for those of us who wear multiple minority identities or live with long-term health conditions?”

Even though the health risks are unmeasured with trans people, there isn’t any legitimate reason why the vaccine might not work. Trust is a major issue here. The uptake among people of colour is low and isn’t easily addressed as the weight of colonialism and racism forms a significant barrier to trusting the medical establishment.

And on top of all this, we don’t have enough data to know about side effects properly. With so many unknowns, why should we take it? Sam was almost evangelical in his view about the good of the masses versus the good of the individual. A real desire for the love of humanity. “Make a choice to sacrifice yourself for the good of people who will die of this otherwise, whether you know them or not”.

Inequality is a huge risk for coronavirus to kill you. We don’t have the stats on LGBTQ+ people yet, but if you were to pull the data apart you might find LGBTQ+ people are more likely to die. We know that BAME groups are significantly impacted by it and how systemic inequality has contributed to that. We need to save our community from decimation.

The vaccine is a good thing but it’s not the way out. It will dampen the impact of the pandemic, but ultimately if we want this to end we must all continue to dig in and keep going with the measures that are designed to slow the pace of transmission. We’re not much more evolved than the last time a pandemic ripped across the world.

Terrence Higgins Trust (THT) with the British HIV Associate (BHIVA) updated its guidance for people living with HIV after it emerged that “the patient information leaflet for the Pfizer vaccine uses HIV as a specific example of a weakened immune system, which is listed under the warnings and precautions of taking the vaccine. The leaflet advises those affected to contact their doctor, nurse or pharmacist before vaccination”. BHIVA has challenged this reference with Pfizer.

Writing on a Facebook post from January 13, THT says the advice is not based on safety concerns. “There is no current evidence suggesting that people living with HIV experience more side effects from the vaccines. This guidance exists as there is limited research information about people with immune deficiency or HIV taking the vaccine.

“Covid-19 vaccines are expected to be protective in people with HIV and we strongly recommend anyone who is offered the vaccine to accept it. Everyone with HIV is automatically in priority group six so you will get the vaccine earlier than many people. If your clinic thinks you are at higher risk you can be put into priority group four and get the vaccine sooner.”

To see the guidance, visit: https://tinyurl.com/THTguidance.

For more info, contact THT Direct on 0808 802 1221.

How will people know when they will receive the jab?
You’ll get a phone call from your GP. People will get it when it is their turn. Make sure you are registered with a GP. If you are not, you may miss out.

I’ve already had Covid – do I need the vaccine?
If you’ve already had Covid, you don’t have ongoing antibodies. It’s not like chicken pox or measles. The antibodies die off too quickly. There is nothing to stop you getting it again.

How long will the vaccine last for?
We don’t know how effective the vaccine is long term. It will not end the pandemic. The virus is mutating. Vaccines will have to change every season and you will probably have to take the vaccine more than once.
Fighting ‘the heteroactivist enemy’ and other approaches

Prof Kath Browne outlines how research she carried out with Catherine Jean Nash led to the Beyond Opposition project

Same-sex marriage, adoption, LGBTQ+ family status, and government recognition and support have been entrenched legislatively and socially in places like Britain, Ireland and Canada. These changes are contested, including by those who see heterosexual forms of family as the ‘best for society, best for children’, and/or those who see sex/gender as a binary between men and women.

Beyond Opposition

It’s sometimes assumed that those opposed to LGBTQ+ rights are becoming more marginalised or ‘dying out’. Yet a 2018 UK IPOS survey showed that whilst 73% of people supported same-sex marriage, 8% thought it should be banned outright, with a further 13% personally disagreeing. In recent years, we’ve seen protests around LGBTQ+ inclusion in schools and curricula, challenges to university ‘no platforming’ speakers who disagree with LGBTQ+ rights and successful challenges in court to those who refuse to sell cakes with messages of support for gay rights and same-sex marriage.

Our work on ‘heteroactivism’ examines the ways these legislative and cultural changes are challenged. Heteroactivists are not ‘anti-gay’ or homophobic in ways that were apparent in places like the UK in the 1990s: they could instead be classified as ‘pro-heteronormativity’. For example, instead of labelling gay men as paedophiles, heteroactivists often emphasise the importance of biological, married mothers and fathers for children and families. Indeed, heteroactivists spoke of supporting civil partnerships, while opposing same-sex marriage.

As part of the research for our book on heteroactivism, Catherine Jean Nash and I went to events. What is now the Beyond Opposition project started at one of these conferences. The lead organiser offered a case study of parents who did not support their transgender child’s gender transition. My fieldnotes read:

‘Bethany’ (name given, it is likely that the child would choose a more masculine name) was home schooled and moved into a mainstream school. ‘She’ started a same-sex relationship, and now wants to be a boy. The parents want the restoration of family and their ‘daughter’ to grow up to be the ‘woman God wants her to be’. The parents feel that they are not listened to and ‘encouraged by social services’ to treat her like a boy. The parents say that they are told that if they don’t agree to name change that it is neglectful and that ‘she’ is suicidal. The mother argues that ‘we love our daughter’.

As a parent, I wondered how I would feel. What would I do if my children were to reject our fundamental family values at the urging of the state and I was told to respect their decisions to allow them to become the ‘woman God wanted her to be’?

One of the aims of our Beyond Opposition research project is to understand the experiences of those who are opposed to concerned about some of the most important contemporary issues around sex, gender and sexualities; including same-sex marriage, abortion and trans rights. We also want to speak to those who are worried about their kids being taught about same-sex marriage or gender transitioning in schools, those who are concerned about sharing their views about sexual and gender equalities at work and others who find legislative and cultural changes challenging.

Participants in Beyond Opposition have told us that their views affect their lives. They have been threatened, silenced, excluded and some avoid sharing their views in places to avoid a negative reaction. Our work on heteroactivism tells us that these experiences of social exclusion further galvanize people to seek out like-minded groups and organisations, to work together to enable them to live their lives. These connections, networks and empowerments are having some successes in court rulings and in terms of sympathetic media coverage, especially when the arguments are based on personal experiences of exclusion.

Identifying the enemy, the oppressor, is an important political tool. It unites specific groups and enables key fights against oppression; it allows us to identify those who we should hate/avoid/attack on social media. This can be empowering and effective for some forms of social justice, where making an ‘us’ against a ‘them’ creates community and belonging. We can know who we are, which ‘side’ we are on, who our allies are.

However, increasing polarisations around ‘us vs them’ can also negatively affect the most marginalised. It may be that alongside already existing strategies of resistance, we might also consider other ways of engaging, of seeking to understand the complexity of each other. The Beyond Opposition project is focusing on understanding the experiences of those with a range of views in order to more deeply understand how their feelings of exclusion and ostracisation can fuel increasing polarisation. It isn’t about ideological debates or diminishing forms of activism that fight oppressions. The project is instead exploring how people live with or alongside others – colleagues, friends, siblings, partners – who disagree. The project is exploring what we can learn when we listen to these experiences.

We still need to know more! Please complete our questionnaire, which is open to everyone: www.beyondopposition.org/questionnaire/. Tell us how you feel about people who hold different views to you. We’re also keen to speak to those who have issues with same-sex marriage and LGBTQ+ rights, those who are pro-life and/or would describe themselves as ‘gender critical’. Do share our website with anyone in your network, your families or friends and they can participate in confidential interviews and questionnaires.

www.beyondopposition.org

Heteroactivism

Resisting Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual and Trans Rights and Equalities

Catherine Jean Nash

Kath Browne
Five years ago I asked my friend and, at the time, personal trainer, what she knew about fitness and trans bodies. When we met again the following week I was impressed by Marquita’s desire to fill the gaps in her knowledge. She had spent the week researching trans people and sport. This gave me immediate faith in her as an ally to the trans community.

We continued to work together as client and trainer, and I began to see the impact that her workouts were having on my wellbeing. Not only was I getting fitter and stronger, my mood was doing better than ever before.

Inspired by this new-found medication, I wanted other trans people to have access to this kind of support. Personal training is expensive and most people I knew in the community can barely afford to house and feed themselves, let alone have the luxury to workout. So I asked Marquita if she wanted to be involved.

In January 2016 we launched Trans Can Sport together. Prior to us launching I was not aware of any other trans community sports groups anywhere. Every so often there had been Trans Swimming at St Luke’s Swimming Pool near Queens Park, an initiative that had been variously organised by Clare Project and Brighton Bothaways and, in more recent years, something the city council had arranged.

Trans people have been participating in sports for ages. We’re part of LGBTQ+ groups like BLAGSS, the Brighton Beachcombers, the Frontrunners or the Sea Serpents. Sometimes we’re out and other times we’re on the down low. It doesn’t always feel necessary to out ourselves – we just want to pitch up and play and not talk about being trans. Other times, sadly, we feel unsafe to be out, due in part to policy from governing bodies that excludes trans people. We are shut out with discriminatory policy and spurious arguments about safety.

Increasingly, thanks to social media, we are seeing more trans representation in sport. Chris Mosier, the US triathlete, is increasingly vocal about his experiences and speaks up for trans inclusion and against transphobia. Mosier is part of Team USA and is thought to be the first openly trans person to be selected for international events. Rachel McKinnon is a Canadian cyclist who became world champion in 2018. As a result of this she faced a transphobic backlash. In a tweet responding to accusations that she has an unfair advantage, she said, “We’re [trans people] disproportionately NOT GREAT at sport. We’re grossly underrepresented in elite sport.”

“Our reach has grown. No longer confined to delivering activities in Brighton & Hove, people from all over the UK can now join us”

To become an elite sportsperson takes years of hard graft and training. To even contemplate becoming elite requires access to that sport in the first place. The binary gender framework bars most trans, non-binary and gender non-conforming people. Those that do play will at some point have to choose between their sport and being themselves.

Trans Can Sport seeks to change the narrative around sports for trans and non-binary people. Since 2016 we’ve offered our participants opportunities to try a huge range of activities. We started our project with a humble offer of boxing, circuits, yoga and weightlifting and the hope that perhaps a handful of trans people will take the opportunity to come together for fitness. We had funding for a few months and weren’t sure if it would work. But they came, only a few at first. We kept our sessions small, no more than six people per activity. This was deliberate, to make the sessions more intimate and friendly. We didn’t advertise where the sessions would be held, so that we could as far as possible ensure privacy and allay fears of any lurking haters that might want to do us harm. The response was fantastic. People came back for the second, third and fourth sessions and are still coming back five years on. Our range of activities has exploded and over the years we’ve offered everything from our original timetable to racket sports, water sports, circus and sailing. We run and climb and fight our way to wellbeing.

2020 presented a challenge to everyone. How do we adapt to these sudden restrictions on everyday life? The trans community is already isolated in parts and marginalised in society. We swiftly moved online and by the end of March 2020 we offered our first Trans Can Sport Online. We provided activities that were suited to housebound life. Gentle mobility workouts to help counteract ever increasing time sat down indoors. We kept the fighting spirit alive with online Fighting Fit boxing classes. We ran workshops; on running technique for those new to hitting the pavement, nutrition to educate about how that freshly baked banana bread fits in with a healthy diet and meditation to help balance our minds despite the stress.

Our reach has grown. No longer confined to delivering activities in Brighton & Hove, people from all over the UK can now join us. But more amazing has been how we’ve been able to reach those in the city who felt they couldn’t leave their homes, even pre-pandemic.

In recognition of this hard work, we’ve been honoured with the award for Outstanding Contribution to Trans Sport Participation 2020 from the Federation of Gay Games. We are thrilled and very proud that we’ve been doing our bit to help people keep well. We couldn’t have done it without our trainers, participants and our funders, the Brighton Rainbow Fund.

more info

www.transcansport.co.uk

@transcansport

“Trans Can Sport seeks to change the narrative around sports for trans and non-binary people. Since 2016 we’ve offered our participants opportunities to try a huge range of activities”
Drag for All Seasons
Linda Gold’s all-inclusive drag TV extravaganza gears up for summer showing

Six years after the competition launched, Linda Gold’s EuroDrag, held in more than 15 countries in 30 venues, is poised to hit TV screens later this year as the EuroStars Drag Contest, with Linda hosting alongside Dys Alexia.

Inspired by the Eurovision Song Contest and RuPaul’s Drag Race, the three-part EuroStars series is completely inclusive, aiming to “give all drag a platform, whatever their age, sex or gender, from kings to queens to trans – it is open to everybody”.

Thirty competitors – 20 the best of the best from previous competitions and a further 10 to be chosen from an online video casting – will face a panel of studio judges and a public vote in the race to win 1,000 Euros of paid gigs and their own 30-minute TV show.

Linda Gold says the contest was set up in protest at the lack of inclusion in RuPaul’s Drag Race – although season 13 of the show in America features the first transmasculine contestant and the two camps are now friends.

“We’ve got to be thankful to them because without them we wouldn’t have this phenomenon. Both our hosts [alongside Linda], Sedergine and Janey Jacke, and seven of our judges are all people who have been on Drag Race,” says Linda from the Liverpool offices of the 100% non-profit company, from which all profit goes back into the LGBTQ+ community. “We have nine ambassadors, six of them are from Drag Race.”

Linda started EuroDrag while living in Sweden, “where everyone can be a drag queen”. They continue: “RuPaul’s Drag Race exploded around season three. They were excluding trans and drag kings and biological women, but it’s so normal in Sweden for women to be drag kings. We started EuroDrag and had UK kings and queens flying over to take part. We took it to Norway and Poland and before we knew it we had to take it to the UK.”

There has been a huge explosion in the popularity of drag in the mainstream. “Drag is just the in-thing,” says Linda, adding that the BBC had said it was the most featured term in search engines.

“It’s because of RuPaul’s Drag Race going to BBC 3. Even though it’s not the most watched show, it was the highest search.” Even Linda’s 70-year-old drag-loving mum learned to use the internet as a result. “She has become a computer whiz.”

Currently on hold due to the lockdown restrictions, EuroStars will pick up filming again hopefully on June 3 at the Latest TV studios in Brighton. In the first two episodes the 30 contestants will compete for one of eight places in the final, episode three, and the performers’ personal stories will be featured as part of the format.

The shows will air across all UK local TV stations and will be be shared by a network of distributors and streamed on numerous platforms and websites, including EuroDrag TV, LGBTV and Chew the CudTV.

more info

www.eurodrag.co.uk
plenty of things to photograph as you wander along the seafront in Brighton.

The lockdowns have affected different industries in different ways. Some industries have been forced to shut down entirely, others continue to function in a diminished way. Tom had this to say on his lockdown experiences: “Lockdown gave me the time and space to rethink my whole approach to my photography, which ended up with my starting Prints by Tom Selmon. Of course, the whole situation has been challenging, particularly at this present time.”

His online print shop is well worth checking out. As we’re spending more time at home, home furnishing has become even more popular than usual. If there’s ever been a time to spruce up your living room it’s now. Tom’s work is printed on Giclée Hahnemühle Pearl 285gsm paper. The prints include nature photography, nudes, erotica and LGBTQ+ nightlife.

Tom Selmon is a photographer based in Brighton. He has over 12 years’ experience and his work is wide ranging. His main areas of interest include untouched nature, queer nightlife and erotica.

He moved to Brighton last September. The move was partly a result of the lockdown and also a desire to find new imagery to capture in a new city. He’s already taken a lot of photos in Brighton he’s proud of so he considers the move to be a success already.

Street casting is one of his preferred approaches to photography. This involves capturing images of people he spontaneously finds while walking the streets. This can also involve contacting people via social media and setting up a shoot. Naturally, there are

LGBTQ+ Life Through A Lens

Brighton-based photographer Tom Selmon’s work captures the beauty of raw, untouched nature and the lure of queer nightlife in all its liberated glory. Alex Klineberg takes a peek
Robert Mapplethorpe is one of his biggest influences. Mapplethorpe is famed for his transgressive black-and-white photographs of celebrities and male nudes. He was immortalised in Patti Smith’s bestselling autobiography *Just Kids*. Mapplethorpe’s work was considered to be controversial in America back in the 1980s.

As we discussed with Tom, depicting female nudes is far less taboo, whereas male nudes are more provocative. Showing a male nude presents a man in a vulnerable way. Historically, it’s been easier to depict women as vulnerable. Male artists have certainly had few reservations about depicting women without any clothes on – walk around any art gallery and see for yourself. Perhaps depicting male nudes will prove to be less controversial in years to come.

Tom discussed his latest work with us: “My upcoming project is to create the second issue of *UN-FOLD*, which is a zine I self-published last year that celebrates nudity, eroticism and queer culture.” Check out his prints and consider livening up your living room.

Tom doesn’t think erotic photography will ever cross over into mainstream culture (it wasn’t easy to find an appropriate verb for that sentence). Even Madonna couldn’t manage it with her *Erotica* era at the height of her fame. Some photographers have depicted nude female subjects in more innovative ways, such as Helmut Newton and Guy Bourdin. But the nude body – especially the sexualised nude body – will always be controversial. Janet Jackson’s wardrobe malfunction almost caused America to implode.

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What attracted you to costume design?
I have always made costumes for myself, and I would often put far too much effort into the costume than it needed. At university we would have themed nights out, so one week I’d be a farmer, the next I’d be a pirate, then Where’s Wally? or the Easter Bunny. I’d love to be able to make something that would transform you into someone else for a bit.

I like to dress up and be silly but I’m not a performer and hate to be on stage, so the next best thing was to make costumes for the amazing performers I know.

Can you tell us about the outfits you made for Joe Black to wear on RuPaul’s Drag Race?
The whole Drag Race production is very secretive, the queens are not allowed to tell anyone that they’re on the show. But, when you get a drag queen asking for several very specific outfits in a very short space of time, you do get an inkling that this might be something exciting.

So far (22/01/2021) I made the David Bowie sequin gown for the ‘UK Gay Icon’ runway; and a caterpillar to butterfly transformation dress that unfortunately didn’t make it to the main stage.

For the Bowie dress I was given the Life on Mars reference and it had to mix with the classic Black style of fishtail dress that I have made many times before. I studied where the seams and pockets of the original suit fell and worked them into the design. I was able to do multiple fittings to get the shape just right.

The transformation dress is something that I specialise in. In fact, one of the first drag outfits I made was a Beauty and the Beast transformation dress for Misnie (formerly Miss Disney). It mixes costume making and engineering to achieve a magical and unexpected transformation between the two.

I was given the concept of ‘caterpillar to butterfly’ and had to work out the outfits and to transition between the two without either being too bulky.

For the Christmas promo I made a glitter green fishtail dress which The Guardian described as “a sultry Christmas tree”.

I had about three weeks for the whole set of costumes, and the next time I saw them they were on the main stage.

How did you feel about being part of the Joe Black team for the show?
I’m so proud to be part of the team that works with Joe. It’s amazing to see all our hard work paying off. Dan Chapman, of the Riah Hair Studio, is brilliant at styling wigs, and does so for loads of the Brighton performers. Arran Shurvinton does a great job of accessorising and adding that extra sparkle to my costumes. Greg Bailey takes wonderful photographs of it all. And of course there are other costume makers around the country that do beautiful work for Joe too.

Would we have seen more of your outfits had Joe progressed further and if so what have we missed out on?
Joe is posting his looks weekly as the show progresses on his social media feeds. I find out what’s been used at the same time as everyone else.

Who else have/do you make costumes for?
I make costumes for a lot of the Brighton queens — Lydia L’Scabies, Alfie Ordinary, Misnie, Dave the Bear, Psychofag to name but a few. In 2019 I had seven different outfits in the Big Brighton Drag Pageant, which was so surreal. I was gutted when the 2020 pageant was cancelled as I was just starting to get enquiries.

One of my most high-profile costumes was a ‘Royal’ look for Cheryl Hole, worn in the Drag Race tour opening number. We based it on
for. And Brighton-based designer @ash_holden who makes these traditional tailored garments with a deconstructed modern twist.

You have several other strings to your bow. How has your freelance prop-making/marquetry/cake-baking been affected by the pandemic?

Before costume-making, I used to do a lot of prop-making for film and TV, but gradually I’ve moved to mostly doing costume with the occasional prop job. Especially during the pandemic, a lot of the work is in London so it’s not ideal to commute. I did some architectural models which I could do from home, making tiny individual houses for new housing developments, which kept me busy for a while.

I also do pen and ink illustrations and have two books out already, *The Little Book of Queer Icons* by Samuel Alexander and *Iconic Women of Colour* by Candl Williams, published by Summersdale. They are both a set of biographies of some amazing people, each with their own portrait. Unfortunately, my third book, *Iconic Women in Sport*, has been pushed back for physical release due to the pandemic, but will hopefully be out soon.

What have you been doing during lockdown?

I’ve teamed up with The British Beard Club to make ‘beard masks’. As a bearded person I found regular masks would leave my beard flattened to my face. I designed them to fit around a beard without squashing the hair. They’ve been selling out regularly, so I usually have an order on the go.

I was lucky enough to work on the team behind the costumes of *The Masked Singer*, at Plunge Creations in Portslade. We had to work with lots of restrictions in place to make sure we were safe. I was the person who had to make the adjustments to the costumes after they’d been for their top secret fittings. We had no idea who the costumes were for, but it was fun trying to guess based on their measurements. I’ve been watching along to find out who they are.

What upcoming plans do you have?

Who knows, maybe season three will bring more of my outfits to the runway? We’ll all just have to wait and see.

It’s so difficult to actually plan anything at the moment. I’d love to be able to just get on with making a load of silly outfits for the massive post-pandemic party.

What are you most looking forward to when lockdown ends?

Definitely going to Polyglamorous in some new ridiculous outfit and just licking everyone. That was allowed before the pandemic, right?

Another of my favourites was Psychofag’s black PVC dress they wore in the Drag Pageant at Polyglamorous Pastel.

What’s the favourite you have made so far?

I really love the sequinned sailor suit I made for Alfie Ordinary. It’s quite simple but really effective and so, so camp. I even made myself a blue cotton version to wear at Polyglamorous Pastel.

Favourite designer?

As a costume designer I don’t really follow fashion designers that much, I tend to look at traditional costume and dress. When someone wants a specific costume, I need to make sure it reads as that immediately to an audience, so I have to work with rather than against stereotypes. When I was working on Psychofag’s PVC dress, I was looking at Victorian governesses and nurses for inspiration.

There are a few amazing and inspirational designers I follow on social media: @markeyew on Instagram makes these fantastic otherworldly headaddresses, and really plays with gender in his modelling; @magdaleneceleste does beautiful work that I’m very envious of. She uses lots of intricate lace and beading on her designs which I just don’t have the time.
Nick Hudson, a composer/artist based in Brighton, is the founder and lead singer of Gothic dystopian post-punk ensemble The Academy Of Sun. We caught up with him to discuss his latest album, lockdown and LGBTQ+ icons.

How have you been coping with lockdown? I've thrown myself into a rigorous regimen encompassing either of three states: workaholism, sleep or abject misery. I'm terrible at relaxing, so unless I'm occupied with work I tend to fall off the chassis and tumble into a chasm. I haven't yet succumbed to YouTube videos of Ceefax. That happened in lockdown two...

TEA, TUNES & TINKERING
Alex Klineberg catches up with Nick Hudson, composer, artist and lead member of The Academy of Sun

Your new album, Font Of Human Fractures, is your first in five years. How does it compare to your previous work?
Well! It occurred to me that, despite the piano being my weapon of choice since I was six and my solo tours comprising predominantly piano and voice, I'd never issued a record that was piano-led. A bizarre oversight, one might think. So this one is largely scored for piano and tricks violins. It's closer to a neo-classical record with Goth-electronica undertones than it is a pop or a rock record. With a few curveballs...

One of the songs is inspired by Pier Paolo Pasolini. How has his work influenced you?
He's one of the greatest poets. His Supplica A Mia Madre articulates that sacred, bittersweet love between mother and gay son with a tsunami of pointed anguish. He created an entirely new film language. And it's fair to say I'm drawn to the quintessential Pasolini-an young man too. He embodied manifold contradictions, which I believe to be the only sensible means of conducting oneself in a world where nuance is at risk of being quashed by heavy-handed, brutish ideologues.

Tokyo Nights was written by your aunt. How did that come about?
She was in a band called Room 101 (in a month where the far right are screeching about Trump's social media censorship as Orwellian I find this faintly amusing). This was their 'hit' – in that they performed it on the John Peel show and Billy Bragg crowed favourably about it. She gave me my first keyboard when I was six and thus kickstarted this whole delicious folly. I'd long wanted to record a version in honour of this. My version just happened to turn out like kitsch, deranged J-pop.

This issue is dedicated to LGBT History Month. Which LGBTQ+ icons are you most drawn to?
Well I'm writing this on the anniversary of Queen David's regrettable passing and crying my way through Reality (in every sense).

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Well I'm writing this on the anniversary of Queen David's regrettable passing and crying my way through Reality (in every sense).

So yeah, Bowie, Diamanda Gallas, David Wojnarowich. Derek Jarman – I scored a couple of Derek's super-8 short films last year; they'll be coming out on limited vinyl in May. Coil. Very much Coil. Jhonn Balance died on my 23rd birthday. He was, to my mind, a queer, contemporary conduit for similar energies to William Blake. How we miss Jhonn.

When do you expect to play live again?
We're missing live gigs!
I dunno! The pandemic has made Kate Bush of us all. Chinese meals, Earl Grey, interminable studio tinkering and no live dates. Maybe I'll do a 21-date residency at Hammersmith Apollo when this is all over with my wonderful son Bertie playing the Rolf Harris character.

More info:
www.nickhudsonindustries.bandcamp.com
f @TheAcademyOfSun
Young Carers’ Project

Alex Klineberg catches up with Ruth Sullivan, manager of the Young Carers’ Project, which supports young carers in Brighton & Hove

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Young Carers’ Project

The Young Carers’ Project at the Carers’ Centre is one of the most important charities in Brighton & Hove, offering many forms of assistance to young carers (aged 6-17 years), as well as support for young adult carers (16-25 years).

Young carers take on many responsibilities. They could be a young person dealing with an alcoholic parent, a non-able bodied sibling, a sick grandparent, etc. Some young carers can find themselves in very extreme positions, where they have to balance school work with providing round-the-clock care to a relative. Unsurprisingly, young carers often struggle with mental health issues of their own. They are forced to grow up very quickly.

We caught up with Ruth Sullivan, manager of the Young Carers’ Project, who gave us an overview of what their work entails: “We provide support for young carers targeting the areas they most need help with. This might be engaging with school or social services, giving them a break, or it can be as simple as helping them to meet new people who understand their experiences and difficulties.”

Things have become more challenging for young carers during the pandemic. Many relied on school as the one place they can escape from their responsibilities. With the schools closed throughout much of the past year, their responsibilities as carers have increased.

“The pandemic has impacted young people in a profound way – educationally and socially. For young carers that’s even more so. They have lost their respite, their support networks and they are essentially left in a 24/7 caring role. There’s a presumption that everyone has two healthy and able-bodied parents at home to help deliver home schooling, but that’s simply not the case,” Ruth explained.

Many young carers in deprived areas don’t have proper internet access or computers, making it difficult to access online learning. The Young Carers’ Project can provide tablets and laptops. You can even donate a spare device for young carers to use: better than it gathering dust in a bottom drawer.

Special services are offered to young carers identifying as LGBTQ+. They can receive support from people within the community. As well as financial and practical advice, the Young Carers’ Project hosts cultural events and social activities – although these have become harder to operate during the pandemic.

Some of the art projects have been quite ambitious. These have included musical experimentations with rare synthesizers and even forming full-blown punk bands. The bands played in front of a live audience and even braved some Bowie and Iggy Pop covers. Nick Hudson – interviewed separately in this magazine – has collaborated with Ruth on these art projects.

“We’ve also organised a bunch of fundraisers with an array of local acts. The upcoming digital festival is a software version of this kinda format,” Nick said.

Two-hundred and 50 young carers are currently in the programme in Brighton. About a third are sibling carers, but most are caring for parents. Many of them will be the main carer in their household. Ruth and her team have been working hard to continue providing support during lockdown and the endless tier restrictions.

Living in lockdown has been tough on all of us, but for young people in unstable domestic situations it’s been even worse. There are around 800,000 young carers in the UK – no doubt more than you may have assumed. Not enough young carers receive the level of support they need. Many receive no care at all. Over a third are thought to have mental health issues.

At some point in life, we are all likely to need the assistance of a carer. Ageing and illness are the two mountains you can never climb. Young carers make huge sacrifices for a very delicate stage in life. The Young Carers’ Project provides them with the care and moral support they need. Check out their website for more information. You can support their work in a variety of ways.

www.thecarerscentre.org
REVIEWS


Astor Piazzolla (1921-1992) brought Argentinian ‘Nuevo tango’ to concert platforms around the world, and his music has been performed in many guises. Here, Italian saxophonist Marco Albonetti, with the Orchestra Filarmónica Italiana, plays his sensitive interpretations which demonstrate how well the saxophone (mostly the soprano instrument) is suited to taking the role of Piazzolla’s bandonéon (a kind of concertina). The title track, Romance del Diablo, is a sensuous and intimate piece, with the devil definitely in seduction mode. Albonetti plays with aching melancholy, and the orchestral playing is sumptuous throughout. In Las Cuatro Estaciones Porteñas (The Four Seasons of Buenos Aires), several soloists from the orchestra get the chance to shine, with percussive effects in Autumn, and dark, sensuous rumblings in Winter. There’s more virtuosity in Spring, and Summer is lively, with pulsing pizzicato strings beneath the sax solo, before the sliding double-bass builds the tempo, to a final scream from the sax to finish. For Arios de Soledad (Years of Solitude), Albonetti ups the melancholic ante by switching to the baritone sax, and the warm tones, contrasted with the jabbing orchestral tango rhythm, make this a highlight of the disc for me. Two of Piazzolla’s most well-known works are here too. In Oblivion, after a solo sax improvisation over a pulsing double-bass heartbeat, the slow, melancholic milonga tune takes over, with evocative inflections from Albonetti. The disc ends with Libertango and once this gets going, the sax repeats its hypnotic, twisting motif over the piano and bass stamping out the tango rhythm. I’ve heard interpretations with greater abandon here, but Albonetti and the players are certainly captivating to listen to. A disc full of life and romance.


The American Lysander Piano Trio mark their tenth anniversary with a collection of premieres of works by six living American composers. The opening work, Around the Cauldron by Glid Cohen (b.1980) has seven short movements depicting scenes inspired by the three witches in Macbeth. Cohen particularly exploits the high registers of the three instruments for ‘witchy’ effect, and hand-stopped piano strings evoke an electric bass, with lots of glassy string effects too. Reinaldo Moya’s (b.1984) Ghostwritten Variations take inspiration from fictional composers, including Thomas Mann’s Doctor Faustus. Moya makes great use of turbulent perpetual motion, as well as reverberation effects from repeated, pulsing chords, and ghostly high piano ripples against glassy sustained string chords. For Jennifer Higdon’s (b.1962) Love Sweet, the trio are joined by soprano Sarah Shaffer for a set of five songs following the trajectory of a relationship from birth to death. Shaffer has a bright, incisive tone, and expresses the changing moods well here, from the sprightly opening Apology, through the ominous, even disturbing Absence, the elegiac and intense A Gift, to the painful end in A Fixed Idea. They return to Shakespeare for Sofia Belimova’s (b.2000) Titania and Her Suite, and in this delightful miniature, the piano ripples and the violin delicately tweets like a bird. A wild dance builds, with all three players bumping into each other rhythmically, and the result is a beautifully light and wispy confection. William David Cooper (b.1986) turns to Psalm 137 for An den Wassern zu Babel, and he exploits the lyrical potential of the string instruments here, with a sense of frenzy building through the fifth variation, and then driving through to an almost violent conclusion. Jakub Ciupinsky’s (b.1981) The Black Mirror concludes the disc, with some incredibly evocative and effective writing. He creates a ‘seagull’ effect with glissandi (slides) on harmonics, and there are hints of Part in the rising and falling lines. As the intensity builds, the ‘seagulls’ swoop around piano chords, then the strings wind around in repeating, minimalist patterns. The Lysander Piano Trio demonstrate exceptional virtuosic and expressive talent across this diverse selection, thus creating an excellent showcase for all six composers, and their 10th anniversary – Happy Birthday!

3. Talivaldis Kenins Violin Concerto; Concerto for Five Percussionists & Orchestra; Beatae voces tenebrae (SKANI SKANIO88).

Composer Talivaldis Kenins (1919-2008) left Latvia following Soviet occupation after WWII, emigrating via France to Canada in 1951. Despite being one of Canada’s most performed composers, few works have been recorded. So the Latvian National Symphony Orchestra, conducted by Andris Poga, are rectifying that, with a disc of three works, his Violin Concerto, his Concerto for Five Percussionists and Orchestra, and the single movement orchestral piece, with lyrically striking melodies. In the Violin Concerto, performed here impressively and with conviction by Latvian violinist Eva Bendere, the spiky, virtuosic lines, over often sparse and brittle orchestral accompaniment, contrast with expressive falling and rising lines in the slow movement. An extended cadenza begins the finale, and percussion and racing strings herald a race to the finish. The Concerto for Five Percussionists and Orchestra, performed here by members of Perpetuum Ritmico, is highly dramatic. A live performance would carry an added visual benefit, as a dazzling array of instruments are made use of here (not all of which I could identify aurally). There are crashes and knocks from cymbals, woodblock and gong, as well as queasy turning slides on the timpani, and even a siren for a wild finish. To conclude the disc, Beatae voces tenebrae is a mixture of serene calm and anguish of grief – it was written after the sudden death of two close friends, but also possibly commemorated the 100th birthday of his mother, as well as ‘deported loved ones’, victims of the occupation. From a low, rumbling opening, Kenins gradually builds tension, with moments of true anguish from the strings, and some strange effects from the horns. The end brings calms, although the percussion continues to knock away disconcertingly in the background, before the harp rises into nothingness at the end. A fascinating window into a new composer for me, and one I will definitely explore further.

More info

For more reviews, comment and events, visit: nicks-classical-notes.blogspot.co.uk @nickb86uk nbclassical@hotmail.co.uk
The vividness of the palette, which he can dive into with full abandon and could so easily verge into crass eye catching colouration, informs upon the scenes depicted and doesn’t override the relationships which exist on each support. His personal response to figurative stimuli, equally balanced in terms of recognisable forms and the hues that make each element individual yet part of a bigger whole.

To Joshua, the thingness of his work is important, the whole idea of thingness is articulated by the philosopher Heidegger. It’s like something you can point to and see but not name. Art has a way of pointing at the thing in an exquisite way when it works. It’s a poetic thingness is articulated by the philosopher Heidegger. It’s like something you can point to and see but not name. Art has a way of pointing at the thing in an exquisite way when it works. It’s a poetic.

The human experience he’s trying to convey to the viewer, the sense of our involvement in place, our role to see and then be affected, be part of something much larger and expansive than ourselves, an important thing to dwell on in these difficult times. The role of the visual arts to allow us to escape but also be rooted in our lived days, something which I have always valued and partaken in when a painted portal drew me closer to it. Somehow looking at your own works never has the same effect, maybe being the creator you are too close, too involved, have knowledge of how it came about.

Joshua’s works allow me to be somewhere else, be other, away from the realities which can become unpalatable as the days drag out. Even if you have to resort to the less resonant computer experience, the journeys you can take are as vivid as they can possibly be, visual medicine to keep us afloat.

Brighton-based artist Joshua Uviegara works from his Phoenix Studio space. The way he uses scale and colour enlivening the fruits of his labour, giving them more impact when seen in real life or virtually.

He tends to work on a number of paintings at a time and traverse between them, their scale ranging from the more intimate to the immense wall filling proportioned works. Working on unstretched canvas to collage them together onto larger supports, using a wide variety of pigments from the household to acrylics and oil-based paints to create each image.

His subject matter ranging from the filmic, evocations of place, the presence and meaning that is inspired by their evocation, the feelings of loss and hope that are too human to be refused, the concepts of identity and otherness which guide how we feel about ourselves and our place in the world, and memory and truth which are more fluid than we would ever want them to be.

Ella Fitzgerald, which she had sung so wonderfully on her previous album, Summertime, and then delivers a straight version of Cry Me A River that is a thousand miles from the seduction of Julie London, with whom the song is forever associated. The concert ends firstly with Mack The Knife, which she had sung so wonderfully on her previous visit to the city, and then with a sublime reading of Wee Baby Blues. Judging by the roar of the audience, it was good night out in Berlin.

As racial tensions increased across America during the increasingly violent summer of 1968, 16-year-old school student Danny Scher attempted to bring the divided communities of Palo Alto, California together by getting pianist Thelonious Monk and his quartet to play at his high school. Amazingly, Monk agreed, and so took to the school stage at 2pm on the afternoon of 27 October. Monk was past his best by this time, but he pulled out all the stops for a magical performance. The opening ballad Ruby, My Dear positively skips along, Well, You Needn’t is full of detail and event, while Blue Monk almost rocks with pleasure. Even Monk’s squeaky piano stool joins in the fun. A school gig usually promises little, but this performance was breathtaking. Never doubt the power of a schoolboy to get what he wants!

Albanian–Swiss singer Elina Duni’s fourth album for ECM finds her partnering with British guitarist Rob Luft in a set of collaborative performances alongside Swiss flugelhorn player Matthieu Michel and British pianist and multi-instrumentalist Fred Thomas. Duni and Luft first played together in 2017 and from there developed this set of songs of love and exile, producing “an album about contemporary issues facing us all ... also an album about the places we’ve been and loved, places that no longer exist or continue to exist only as a fragment of our imagination.” Duni’s voice – she sings in four languages here – is clear and expressive in tone, both knowing and naïve in equal measure, while Luft’s guitar laps quietly away in the background. It’s all very subdued, and all the more wonderful for it.
ISHIRO HONDA DOUBLE FEATURE
(Eureka Blu-ray). The auteur of Mothra is the undisputed master of 1950s/60s Japanese science fiction. These movies have the virtues you’d expect from the director: clear and simple plotting, charming use of models which, although unconvincing, paradoxically convey the essence of destruction better than the slickest CGI and great Scope photography. They’re basically kids’ films but done with enough panache they’ll delight any adult who’s not expecting another Solaris. The H Man has a mysterious radioactive liquid dissolving people into slimy, sentient, seemingly indestructible blobs. Part-Japanese gangster noir, part-gooey body melting horror, the film is one of the most unique sci-fi films of the 1950s. Battle in Outer Space begins with a series of mysterious catastrophes sweeping the globe, causing the world’s scientists to conclude that beings from another planet are attacking Earth, and the world must unite to defend itself in a gigantic space battle. Extras include audio commentary by Japanese sci-fi historians, stills galleries and a collector’s booklet.

MARLENE DIETRICH AT UNIVERSAL 1940-1942 (BFI Blu-ray). These four films are great examples of a certain type of Hollywood moonshine full of glamour, action and comedy. They’re supremely entertaining yet the modern audience’s awareness that we’re watching a 1940s black and white picture starring Marlene Dietrich adds an agreeable veneer of camp to the proceedings. Dietrich is amazing and effortlessly dominates each frame she’s in. Is she a good actor? Does it matter? Well, not really. Her range may have been somewhat limited but her charisma is so well-suited to the material it beats any amount of Method-inspired genius. The Flame of New Orleans is the best, a charming confection in which Marlene has to decide whether to marry for love or money while playing (none too convincingly it has to be said) a pretend wayward cousin. The Spoilers is a gold-rush Western where Dietrich falls in love with good-guy John Wayne and helps him foil a corrupt judge and thieving Randolph Scott. Seven Sinners has a definite Casablanca vibe to it: a group of ne’er-do-wells and scofflaws try to make ends meet in some foreign port. Bijou (Dietrich) is a torch singer going from one South Seas island to the next, leaving a trail of broken hearts and destroyed drinking premises in her wake. There’s some great songs including I Can’t Give You Anything But Love plus we get to see Dietrich in drag singing The Man’s in the Navy which any queer theorist worth their salt would be able to use as the subject for a decent monograph. Pittsburgh comes in last, a WW2 piece of propaganda mixed up with a morality tale in which John Wayne sees the flaws in individualism and ends up a teensy-weensy bit socialist.

JOHN DILLERMAND. Being single, and therefore having romantic encounters is illegal during lockdown, I’ve taken the advice of various agony aunts (and uncles!) and have decided to watch more adult entertainment. I was certainly intrigued that the latest star in the erotic film firmament was a man with a twelve-foot retractable penis. After lighting the scented candles and cracking open a box of ultrasoft scented Kleenex, I was slightly disappointed to find that Mr Dillermand is actually a cartoon character. However, I soon remembered the Hootman family motto (‘beggars can’t be choosers’) and thought I’d better see this out to the bitter end. The first slight problem I encountered was that the series of adventures our hero stars in are made in Danish and I couldn’t find any subtitles – but as he would presumably be speaking the universal language of love I didn’t think it would make much difference. His first erotic encounter involves lighting a barbeque which led to some mild penis burns. Perhaps a bit too S&M for my tastes but I persevered. Some dogs now entered the fray but luckily the director didn’t go where I feared he might. Instead our hero merely walks the animals down the street which wasn’t really that erotic. They then escape and Dillermand captures them by tempting them onto a moving truck by holding a sausage with the end of his nob. Again, not that arousing. He then lights another barbeque using his penis. And that’s it, really. I know the film makers were trying to introduce us to the character, but I’m hoping episode 2 will be slightly saucier.

Editor’s note: John Dillermand is a Danish animated series aimed at children. Scene apologises for the writer’s confusion.
Sex and sexual activity is a feature of many people's adult lives, so I'm always a little bit surprised that it's still the case that a sex scene in a TV show can provoke so much comment and even outrage, more than perhaps representations of gun or knife crime, physical assault and murder, which are commonplace in drama but thankfully not commonplace in people's lives.

What 'influence' seeing actors performing sex scenes might have is similarly an odd, and a loaded, question. Does seeing a murder on a Tuesday afternoon in *Father Brown* on BBC One influence an audience of furloughed workers and retirees to go out on killing sprees? I've yet to see the evidence that would suggest this.

"The fact that a sex scene in *It's A Sin* can still provoke so much comment and in 2021 still elicit casual homophobia passed off as legitimate comment provides the strongest case for the importance of this programme being commissioned and broadcast"

Talking about sex on screen tends to emerge as a hot topic in the mainstream press and subsequently on social media because of the popularity and high-profile nature of a specific programme. In 2020, BBC's *Normal People* attracted a lot of attention because of the lengthy sex scenes and the visibility of Paul Mescal's penis in many of these scenes. Penises often seem to be very upsetting to people who complain about this kind of material.

"Does seeing a murder on a Tuesday afternoon in *Father Brown* on BBC One influence an audience of furloughed workers and retirees to go out on killing sprees?"

This year a furore has been generated by Russell T Davies' *It's A Sin* and a sex scene in the first episode. Predictably, a British tabloid newspaper with a long reputation for fomenting offence among its readers, was at the heart of this with coverage that social media users were quick to notice and used terms like 'shock' to frame gay sex in a very different way to the ways it describes straight sex scenes in Netflix's *Bridgerton*.

The implicit, and in fact, fairly explicit homophobia of *The Sun's* coverage and the weasel words it was then to use to justify its decisions should come as no surprise to anyone. It certainly won't surprise anyone who is old enough to remember the AIDS crisis in the mid-1980s and the kind of reportage that *The Sun* and other tabloids routinely ran to stoke anxiety and a legacy of homophobia that generations of gay men have had to contend with since then.

The fact that a sex scene in *It's A Sin* can still provoke so much comment and in 2021 still elicit casual homophobia passed off as legitimate comment provides the strongest case for the importance of this programme being commissioned and broadcast. We can easily imagine that we live in a much more tolerant society than we did in the 1980s, but *The Sun* article and the reaction to it tends to demonstrate that we don't need to scratch far below the surface to find attitudes that have no place in the here and now.

This is not a trivial matter about a sex scene in a Channel 4 show that was expressly designed to provoke comment – and I support Davies for his decision, which is a political as well as an artistic one. We are currently again in lockdown and living under conditions in which a government has passed legislation that is unprecedented in making sexual activity between adults that are not cohabiting effectively illegal. These are political decisions that affect everyone but disproportionately affect people, gay males or otherwise, who do not choose to organise their intimate lives around monogamous cohabitation.

Sex is political and sexual representation is also therefore political and seeing adults desiring each other and perhaps having desires that we do not share is one of the ways in which we can understand other people's lives and experiences. This is an influence that seeing sex on screen could perhaps have and one that I am very much in favour of.
Alex Klineberg gets up to speed with one of the UK’s most influential LGBTQ+ writers, and founder of The Polari First Book Prize

Paul Burston has written six novels, including thrillers and state of the nation novels, and columns for The Guardian and The Sunday Times. Burston's AIDS activism was dramatised by Alexis Gregory in his play Riot Act.

He’s also the founder of the long-running LGBTQ+ literary salon, Polari, which started as a modest event in Soho in 2007 and grew to be one of the most interesting literary salons in London. Polari moved to the Southbank Centre – there have also been numerous national tours. The success of the event led to The Polari First Book Prize and The Polari Prize, which are essentially the LGBTQ+ answer to The Booker Prize. Many literary careers have received a significant boost on account of the award.

We caught up with Paul to find out more about Polari: "2020 marked the tenth anniversary of The Polari First Book Prize, which I founded back in 2011. It's the only book prize in the UK dedicated to LGBTQ+ writing and something I'm immensely proud of. In 2019, we added a second prize for non-debut books. Our winners in 2020 were Amrou Al-Kadhí, for their memoir Life As A Unicorn, and Kate Davies, for her novel In At The Deep End.”

In lockdown, Paul has been looking back over many luminaries over the years, from Blondie to Vivienne Westwood.

"I found myself working on the memoir I’ve been putting off writing for so long – largely because it deals with some pretty traumatic events, not least living through the AIDS epidemic in the 80s and early 90s, when I was a member of the activist group ACT-UP. The current pandemic inevitably brought back memories of that earlier one. The timing felt right, so I cracked on with the memoir and have now almost finished it.”

Paul’s memoir will be an important contribution to LGBTQ+ literature, and it’s especially fitting to be discussing the memoir during LGBTQ+ History Month: “It’s a book about survival – as a gay man and a survivor of abuse – and also about the times I lived through, which were pretty seismic in terms of LGBTQ+ rights. When I came out in 1985, gay men had very few rights. We were barely legal. You could still be fired from your job for being gay or arrested for kissing another man in public. Men were still being imprisoned for ‘crimes’ no heterosexual would be. ‘Gross indecency’ only applied to gay and bisexual men. It was the crime Oscar Wilde was charged with way back in 1895 and remained enshrined in law for over a century afterwards. If you’d told me in the 1980s that one day I’d be able to marry my same-sex partner, I’d never have believed you.

“From the moment I came out, I was always right in the thick of things - first as an activist, then as a journalist documenting the changing times for Time Out, The Guardian and various other publications. I also wrote books and struggled with various addictions. I had some adventures and some misadventures. I met many of my idols and I nearly died twice. It’s all in there.”

Now we’re really looking forward to reading the memoir. In the meantime, you can check out Paul’s other books, including his recent bestselling The Black Path.

For tickets to the event with Juno Roche, PJ Samuels and Joelle Taylor on February 3, visit: https://bit.ly/3pNSqJ4

The next Polari Live Online will be on February 25 with Stella Duffy and Niven Govinden. Tickets: www.eventbrite.co.uk/e/polari-live-online-tickets-120624373749

@paulburstonauthor

www.paulburston.com
Alex Klineberg catches up with Dennis Cooper – one of the great alternative voices in American fiction

Dennis Cooper has lived in Paris for a number of years. He continues to write prolifically, both as a novelist and blogger. William Burroughs once said of Cooper: “He is – God help him – a natural-born writer.”

First of all, how did you find the plague year of 2020? Did you have a good lockdown?
Well, I haven’t gotten sick, and no one I know has gotten more than just mildly sick, so there’s luckiness there. Overall, it sucked, of course. France had a really serious quarantine from March to May where you couldn’t leave your home even to buy food without government permission. The lockdown isn’t as harsh right now, but I think we’re heading back into home imprisonment again soon. Being a writer, it hasn’t really harmed my art-making so much. But I collaborate with a French theatre director/choreographer, Gisèle Vienne, on her works, and it’s been murder for her since all touring is cancelled, and the premiere of her new piece has endlessly delayed. The worst thing is cancelled, and the premiere of her new choreographic work seems to have escaped being cancelled everything obviously encourages that. My work seems to have escaped being cancelled, and I’m well known enough to have something kneejerk to say about it. And how social media encourages people to have something kneejerk to say about everything obviously encourages that. My work seems to have escaped being cancelled so far, but I guess I’m well known enough that j ust my name is a trigger warning. It’s another strange thing because doing the blog the way I do involves a shitload of work, but I keep doing it anyway so I guess it must be valuable to me.

You were one of the first major authors to take up blogging. Your blog seems to have taken on a life of its own. How do you distinguish blogging from novel writing?
I don’t think there’s much connection. The blog keys into another great interest of mine, which is curating and editing and drawing attention to things that I think are inspiring and too unknown. I used to edit this kind of punk literary/art zine in the late 1970s and early 1980s called Little Caesar, and I had a publishing imprint for a while in the early 2000s called Little House on the Bowery, and I think the blog is part of that journey or whatever. Plus, in the case of my blog, there’s this community of readers and commentators who are often young writers or artists or filmmakers that I interact with on the blog daily via the comments, and that’s nice because I can encourage them in their work and find new comrades and friends as well. It’s a strange thing because doing the blog the way I do involves a shitload of work, but I keep doing it anyway so I guess it must be valuable to me.

You write a lot about sexual obsession. Would you say it’s been the key theme of your work?
I would say that if my work has a key theme it would be trying to articulate very hidden and complicated emotions and thoughts. I’ve always seen sexual obsession and/or the axis of sex and violence as situations where one’s feelings and ideas become the most inarticulate and secret and charged and defiant against language. The challenge of trying to find a way to do the impossible – using words to expose what happens in a person’s head when they’re in the grip of those activities or obsessions – has always excited and scared and compelled me for some reason, really since I was very young. And I seem to keep going back to that material and trying to find new and more successful ways to solve that mystery somehow.

“I’ve always seen sexual obsession and/or the axis of sex and violence as situations where one’s feelings and ideas become the most inarticulate and secret and charged and defiant against language”

You’ve lived in Paris for many years. What drew you from the US to the Old World?
Initially it was for love. I was in love with a Russian guy. We tried for a long time to get him any kind of US visa, even a tourist one, so he could come to the States, but he was always rejected because, as I don’t need to tell you, the US is not exactly welcoming to non-Americans, and particularly Russians for some reason. So, to meet up, I needed to go to Moscow or we had to both travel to some neutral place like France, which has no problem with Russians. Eventually it was so difficult that it was either break up or move somewhere friendly, and we ended up in Paris.

Plus, I’ve been a Francophile since I was a little kid, and living in Paris was a lifelong fantasy. And my books were well known here, so I was able to come here as more than a nobody, which helped.

“That people who otherwise seem cool and thoughtful have become aggressively afraid of being challenged is a depressing development”

Do you consider the five books that make up the George Miles Cycle to be your greatest literary achievement?
I wrote the George Miles Cycle novels over about 10 years and planned it out for years before that, so I’m pretty proud of it. I don’t know that I think it’s my greatest achievement, but whether artists are the best judge of their own work is one of those eternal unanswerable questions. I’m personally prouder of some of my later works. I think I’ve become a better writer over time. If I had to choose, I think my best works would be my novels The Marbled Swarm and My Loose Thread, my animated GIF novels Zac’s Freight Elevator and Zac’s Drug Binge, and Permanent Green Light, one of the films I’ve made with Zac Farley, although I don’t know if that counts as literary.

You write a lot about sexual obsession. Would you say it’s been the key theme of your work?
I would say that if my work has a key theme it would be trying to articulate very hidden and complicated emotions and thoughts. I’ve always seen sexual obsession and/or the axis of sex and violence as situations where one’s feelings and ideas become the most inarticulate and secret and charged and defiant against language. The challenge of trying to find a way to do the impossible – using words to expose what happens in a person’s head when they’re in the grip of those activities or obsessions – has always excited and scared and compelled me for some reason, really since I was very young. And I seem to keep going back to that material and trying to find new and more successful ways to solve that mystery somehow.

Do you think the culture is becoming more puritanical? Or is social media becoming more noisy?
That’s hard to answer. I have this resistance to generalisations, so when you say ‘culture’ I go blank. The people I know and respect and deal with are, if anything, less puritanical than the people I used to know. But then there’s the whole ‘cancel culture’ fad of the moment, and maybe that’s what you mean. That people who otherwise seem cool and thoughtful have become aggressively afraid of being challenged is a depressing development. And how social media encourages people to have something kneejerk to say about everything obviously encourages that. My work seems to have escaped being cancelled so far, but I guess I’m well known enough that just my name is a trigger warning. It’s definitely an insane time. I suspect a lot of people will look back on what they believed and said publicly during this period and feel shocked by their own conservatism.
Robert Jones Jr The Prophets: A Novel (£18.99, published by riverrun). This powerful exploration of the magnificent unconditional power of love between two black queer enslaved men is stunning. Its lyrical beauty contrasting the brutal realities of the protagonists’ lives. Samuel and Isaiah are two enslaved men on a Mississippi plantation, tending the livestock and each other, dedicated to each other since boys, encircling their own meagre private intimacy with solace and trust in the vicious brutality of their self-appointed masters. The emotion on the pages is raw, real and leaches into your skin. Jones writes horrific scenes of the believable daily lives of the lovers whose passionate love powers them but when older slave Amos becomes evangelical, spreading the master’s gospel, poisoning that which was always accepted, turning people against each other, dividing, denying and destroying, what they have is judged as sinful and threatening. Jones brings the many voices of the plantation strongly, wrapping the strength of the enduring slave women tightly into the narrative as the tension rises. Giving voices to the mysterious spiritual prophets and delving into the history of the ancestral Kosongo people and their fluid ideas of sexuality and gender, a culture destroyed by brutal interventions. Examining the ambitions of the slave master and the toxic eroding heritage of slavery and the legacy of generations of abuse, both on the enslaved and those who lord it over them. The explosion when it comes is astonishing in its depth of suffering. Jones’s prose picks out simple small moments which expand it over them. The explosion when it comes is astonishing in its depth of suffering. Jones’s prose picks out simple small moments which expand it over them.

Zeyn Joukhadar The Thirty Names of Night: A Novel (£16, published by Atria Books). Oh this book, it trembled when I opened it and then sucked me into this gorgeous, crepuscular narrative which I could feel breathing next to me, it’s so alive! It’s a stunning portrait of a young Syrian-American artist and how love, life and work twist together in his life as he seeks to express his true gender. Taking divergent strands of very different narratives, testimonies and dream-like sequences, the author weaves these into a magical carpet ride, full of unexpected emotion, geographic love letters to New York and queer working-class Arab communities across metropolitan America. It’s full of ghosts, the protagonist’s mother a touchstone presence whose loss seems to stall development, but the past is everywhere, underfoot. This constant underpinning of history, family and meaning gives a platform for the author to explore new identities, seek out trans and queer communities and explore the true meaning of belonging, family and self-love. Joukhadar’s prose is seductively beautiful; so sharp it cuts, deep down into the living urgent flesh, past secrets and dreams, into the very heart of this narrative about the search for meaning. I learnt so much from reading this book, but the author feels no need to explain anything, the writing is so effortlessly rich and so compassionate to the lives of the narrators that understanding is natural.

Morgan Rogers Honey Girl (£12.99, published by Park Row). This is a cracking debut, heart-warming and a joy. We ride along with Grace as she hits Vegas to celebrate working flat out on her astrophysics PhD, feeling squeezed tight under her family’s hard-working, high-achiever expectations of what a woman like her “ought to do”. An out-of-character girl’s weekend seems like a necessary indulgence. The pace then stampedes; she meets a woman, gets drunk, marries her. Reeling and deciding to move across the continent to New York with the wife she’s only just beginning to know. Rogers writes with warmth, her prose giving us an intimacy with the characters’ dreams, aspirations, the breathless passion of abandoning yourself to hot, wild love and how these passions crash and crash when the hard work of daily life comes calling. The narrative thumps along and feels real with characters that are sweet and want things we all want – love, understanding, acceptance – but also that to get there we need to look back at how...
They have published two issues since launching in the spring of 2019. The first issue, memorably titled Seasons of a Dyke, is a compilation of art and poetry by lesbian artists living in rural areas of the United States and in smaller cities, such as Pittsburgh, Baltimore, etc.

The second issue, Show Me What You Got, gathers poetry by older lesbian artists around the world. The third issue, dedicated to lesbian artists who identify as disabled, will be published in the spring of 2021.

Show Me What You Got is well worth checking out. All of the poems are penned by writers over the age of 55. Visibility is an important issue for older LGBTQ+ people. So much visible LGBTQ+ culture is geared towards the younger crowd, but it’s the older generation who paved the way in less liberal times. Some of the pieces in Show Me What You Got date back to the 1970s and 1980s, reflecting the anarchic punk legacy of the time. Some of the more recent pieces reflect on the nature of desire, loss and the ageing body. As we age we don’t suddenly lose our desires. One thing is for sure: just about the only certain fact is that we will all age. What’s more, it tends to happen quite quickly. You suddenly realise you’re not young anymore.

“Cross generational discourse is imperative to our work as a community and progress as dykes. This issue is a culmination of the intimacies, work, courage, curiosity and love that is vital to our continued hope and resistance. We cannot look forward without looking back,” Jeanette Spicer writes. “We as the editors of WMN believe it is necessary to get to know and understand the histories and experiences of lesbians who came before us in order to prosper and thrive now, and for future generations.”

It’s a fitting message as we mark LGBTQ+ History Month. Collecting and preserving the stories of those who came before is what it’s all about.

WMN is a lesbian publication of art and poetry founded by Jeanette Spicer, Florencia Alvarado and Sara Duelland. Based in New York City, WMN is dedicated to providing a platform for marginalised lesbian-identified artists who may not have the support and/or resources to have their work published and seen.
Turn Back the Pages

Gscene has been published every month for over 27 years, and is a rich chronicle of the history of our LGBTQ+ communities, in and around Brighton & Hove. Chris Gull raids the archives...

February 2006

We start our look back to 15 years ago with news of a women-only sauna night, and follow with a familiar story of the time, the sacking of a transgender employee. Meanwhile, Wild Fruit looked forward to March and an event for ‘gender-bending fruits’.

GET STEAMY!

The UK’s only regular all-night women’s sauna event is back and this time they’ve added massage and mystery to the winning formula of sexy fun, frolics, pampering and entertainment to bring you the greatest Steamy! ever. Besides their usual midnight icebreaking activity, a qualified masseuse will be available for short sessions from around 11pm, and they will be giving away 12 FREE massages – first come, first served! If you like to retain an air of mystery while shedding your inhibitions, you’ll love this event’s theme: Masksto! Plus Steamy! is now open until 6am, at no extra charge.

“Our aim is that Steamy! should be a safe, welcoming, non-judgmental space for women to find pleasure in their own and each other’s bodies in a chilled, non-threatening atmosphere,” says Cathi Stone, co-organiser. “It’s cruising for women but doing it our way. It’s sexy without being sleazy.”

TRANSGENDER EMPLOYEE SACKED

Michelle-Louise Lewis, a post-operative transsexual living in Hove, alleges discrimination after being dismissed from her position as a VDU operator with American Express, a position obtained through recruitment agency Adecco. She intends to take her grievances to an industrial tribunal. Allegations include improper grievance processes being followed, being called “mate”, “sir” and “fucking tranny” by work colleagues. On reporting incidents to her line manager, she was allegedly told not to “rock the boat” and she further alleges that she was threatened if she went to the press she would never work in Brighton again by an Adecco employee.

A spokesperson for Adecco said: “Adecco has a robust policy of equal opportunities and diversity and all associates are placed in assignments based on skills and ability alone. We work closely with American Express at all times to ensure that job roles are assessed based on job-related criteria.”

A spokesperson for American Express said: “We cannot comment on an individual case assessed objectively on job-related criteria.”

February 2011

Two Gscene stalwarts chatted, and one lifted their kit, the Lesbian Lives conference moved to Brighton, and most importantly the saga of Pride (old old Pride as we call it here) dragged on. When the founder, David Harvey, left the charity started descending into disarray. He reflected sadly that it was time to change as the charity no longer carried out charitable purposes.

PRIDE SHOULD CLOSE DOWN SAYS FORMER CHAIR

In a passionate open letter to the press, David Harvey, former Chair of Pride in Brighton & Hove calls for the charity he helped create, to close down. Saying that ethically the charity should stop its activities, adding that running a party as a charity is morally wrong and an affront to the tens of thousands of charitable efforts across the land. Something has gone wrong. Pride should be an organisation to unite all people from the LGBT community and beyond. However, in recent times it has bred discontent, caused divisions and hurt some of the people who helped to make it great. “With my fellow trustees, we turned Brighton Pride into a charitable trust in 2004 to run the high-profile festival promoting equality whilst giving grants to voluntary groups to participate. However, in October 2009 Pride announced that no more grants would be given out at all. As a charitable trust this is its primary function, and it isn’t doing this anymore. Ethically the charity should stop. The Pride trustees should wind up the charity and allow a commercial operation with gay standing to take over the pitch. Charging for the event will end the ‘free for all’ and help return the festival’s gay mix. “There is a community/business bid on the table backed by three key LGBT community organisations and supported by two of the main LGBT voluntary organisations with a promise to create grants for local groups. The business partners in this bid come from the production company Wilde Ones and club brand Wild Fruit – they the very people who, in 2003-6, helped me, my fellow trustees and workers make Brighton Pride the best gay event in the country. Perhaps they can return the jewel to the gay community’s crown?”
TO TY JEFFRIES, AKA MISS HOPE SPRINGS

BLUES BY SPENDING THE EVENING CHATTING

CRAIG HANLON-SMITH BEATS THE JANUARY

Liz Truss government white paper (recently trashed by lifts, trans equality groups welcomed the we were introduced to the concept of scrotum in 2011) announced the theme for Pride 2016, a sense of power knowing where you've come

"It's so much easier to move forward with a

It is now a lost spirit that found me, I really believe that. I write the material, but once I'm into the hair and make-up she finds me." Last year, as Miss Hope Springs, he established himself as the 'go to' residency act with a six month home at The Hippodrome Casino in Leicester Square and now performs a regular Sunday show at The Crazy Coqs in Piccadilly which sells out week after week. How do you keep the material fresh and exciting for those audiences? “I consider myself to have been very lucky in that I've had the residencies, I've been on and off at The Crazy Coqs for four years. I've a large back catalogue and can add a 'Carry On' twist to that line. I write more songs, bring in new songs and now performs a regular Sunday show at The Crazy Coqs in Piccadilly which sells out week after week. How do you keep the material fresh and exciting for those audiences? “I consider myself to have been very lucky in that I've had the residencies, I've been on and off at The Crazy Coqs for four years. I've a large back catalogue and can add a ‘Carry On’ twist to that line. I write more songs, bring in new songs and old songs from a range of shows.”

PRIDE’S CAMPAIGNING THEME FOR 2016 IS ‘UNITING NATIONS’

Following an exceptional and record-breaking year in 2015, Brighton Pride in 2016 will be held from Friday, August 5-Sunday, August 7. Pride’s campaigning theme in 2016 will be Uniting Nations, reflecting Brighton Pride’s ongoing commitment to campaigning for global LGBT+ rights.

Paul Kemp, Pride Director, said: “Pride has evolved over the years with more communities coming together to celebrate every aspect of Pride’s campaigning theme for 2016 is ‘Uniting Nations’.

Following an exceptional and record-breaking year in 2015, Brighton Pride in 2016 will be held from Friday, August 5-Sunday, August 7. Pride’s campaigning theme in 2016 will be Uniting Nations, reflecting Brighton Pride’s ongoing commitment to campaigning for global LGBT+ rights. 2015 was a record year for fundraising with £10,000 raised for community good causes and 200,000 people enjoying the biggest community parade in our city, regardless of sexuality, race, gender, age or ability. It’s important not to go back to themes that trivialise the important message behind the Pride celebration and to highlight the lives and struggles of LGBT+ people across the world as we strive for equality for all. ‘Carnival of Diversity’ remains as the main Parade theme, with Uniting Nations being the 2016 campaigning theme, reflecting the wonderful diversity of global communities with all the colour and vibrancy of carnival. It is a chance to celebrate the uniqueness of Brighton & Hove and the diversity and inclusivity of Pride in our City”.

BUMPER FUNDRAISING YEAR FOR BEAR PATROL IN 2015

2015 was a bumper fundraising year for Bear-Patrol, the LGBT social group, with lots of gatherings, awards and fundraising events raising a staggering £40,351.36. This brings the grand total raised by Bear-Patrol to an amazing £129,198.82 since their first fundraising event in January 2011.

Danny Dwyer, Bear Patrol organiser, said: “I would like to thank everyone who contributed by making a donation, donating a raffle prize or giving their time to help raise this fantastic amount of money. Let’s make 2016 just as successful.”

For more information about Bear-Patrol check out their Facebook page.
He has your back

I’m only guessing, but I suspect that the past few months have been difficult. Lockdowns, restrictions, and bad news. You don’t need me to tell you that if you identify as queer then all of this can be even more challenging. But perhaps there’s a little help to be had in this year’s LGBTQ+ History Month theme of Body, Mind, Spirit, because in all probability at least one of these areas could do with an overhaul.

I certainly can’t give you any advice on how to look after your body as I’ve continually failed miserably to look after my own. I quite like being a bear, even a big bear, but if the truth be known I’m a big unhealthy bear. I eat all the wrong stuff, at the wrong time, and in the wrong amounts. I just found out that part of the problem is that I’m lactose intolerant. Have you tried lactose-free chocolate? It’s like the stuff they used to make cheap Easter eggs out of in the 1970s, but worse.

And I can’t give much advice about looking after your mind as I struggle a lot with my mental health.

But the bit about looking after your spirit, that I know a bit about. It’s been my anchor on many days and could be yours too.

“As crazy as it sounds, I suggest that you imagine a God who loves you, cares for you, doesn’t judge you, and is always on your side”

Meditation works for many people, as does yoga and mindfulness. The Muslim dervishes have various ways of tying up the mind and body so the spirit can be free (whirling dervishes for example) and like some Christians I love a labyrinth. There’s a lovely fingerprint labyrinth in Hove Park.

My favourite is just to pray. Not an ‘on my knees by the bed’ prayer, but a good walk and talk with God. As crazy as it sounds, I suggest that you imagine a God who loves you, cares for you, doesn’t judge you, and is always on your side. The kind of friend you don’t need to censure what you say with, or worry that they might think differently about you if you open up. The kind of radical friend who might give advice but wouldn’t say “I told you so” if you didn’t take it. Just talk to God in your head, or out loud if you prefer. (Folk will assume you’re on the phone, or maybe just exotic).

Don’t be anything but yourself in the moment. Be upset. Be angry. Be grateful. Be confused. Be genuine and open. Don’t be afraid to shout (better done in your head!), and to get things off your chest. Don’t bargain, or expect God to change anything for you, just expect God to be there and to listen. And don’t be surprised if one day you find that God talks back.

Making History

We encounter history every day. Every moment, once it’s passed, becomes instant history. Including that moment then. And that one. And that one. And so on. A constant stream of events moving into the story of each day. How poetic. Sigh.

Each day of our lives is an event, a part of what makes us. What my recent history has been though isn’t going to be making compelling reading. I’m back on furlough for the third time, taking a pay cut and trying to keep myself occupied. It’s probably just as well that I’m not keeping a diary as it wouldn’t make the best diversion for people.

Monday, January 11 – Grey out. Bit grey indoors too. Made a sausage casserole...

Tuesday, January 12 – Grey out. Greyer indoors. Watched Bridgerton.

“Once we get past the daily horror of where we are at the mo, we’re all going to be more open to opportunities, to saying ‘Yes!’ to things we’d previously reject, to doing that which scares us”

Not exactly gripping. So, what were the key moments in my history that are slightly more dramatic? What makes up me? Well. Firstly, realising I could make people laugh. I was away at a camp during my time at university. Entertainment was needed. They asked some people there to do some improvising as Whose Line Is It Anyway? was popular at the time. I was volunteered (there was no way I’d put myself forward), I did it and it went incredibly well. Got some good lines out and people laughed a lot. It was revelatory. I can remember the set-up vividly and I can remember people talking to me afterwards saying complimentary things. It was quite a thing...

First time on stage too – doing an extract from a Greek play in my first year at uni. We all wore white as we were performing in a black room. It was so thrilling, so exciting... such a feeling of teamwork and togetherness. Having my first written sketch performed and hearing the audience’s response. First time with a man, for obvious reasons!

Conversely, my first proper ‘gay’ holiday in Gran Canaria. That was an eye opener... amongst other things! Who knew that much vodka could be involved in just a single drink?

I need more of these moments. I need more firsts. I think once we get past the daily horror of where we are at the mo, we’re all going to be more open to opportunities, to saying ‘Yes!’ to things we’d previously reject, to doing that which scares us, to doing those things that we keep putting off. Making new history, making little moments of new stuff and new things.
Or... Do it For Keith  

By Craig Hanlon-Smith @craigscontinuum

At the time of reading, we will be a couple of episodes into the latest Russell T Davies series, *It’s A Sin*. The drama charts the arrival of AIDS in the UK in the early 1980s – a virus that in many countries, including this one, disproportionately impacted gay, bisexual and trans communities. While *It’s A Sin* is an historical piece, comparisons with our collective current situation are inevitable. Written and filmed before the Covid pandemic, while not creatively intentional, the context of a contemporary audience will inevitably impact how a piece of work is received. Artist Keith Haring said: “Every time I make something, I think about the people who are going to see it and every time I see something, I think about the person who made it.”

Keith Haring is an interesting reflection as in recent years his jelly-bean graffiti style has been mass printed across everything from mugs and Valentine’s Day cards to Primark T-shirts. In the 2020s he is to high art what McDonald’s is to haute cuisine. And yet when he emerged as the 2020s he is to high art what McDonald’s is to haute cuisine. In recent years his jelly-bean graffiti style has become a new weapon with which to beat any seemingly gay kid in the sticks.

Keith Haring is an interesting reflection as in recent years his jelly-bean graffiti style has been mass printed across everything from mugs and Valentine’s Day cards to Primark T-shirts. In the 2020s he is to high art what McDonald’s is to haute cuisine. In recent years his jelly-bean graffiti style has become a new weapon with which to beat any seemingly gay kid in the sticks. The British press went for the jugular. Gay and bisexual men referred to as time-bombs, the religiously fervent proclaiming God’s wrath upon bottom sex on the front pages and post bags. Headlines more often than not proclaiming an out of control gay plague and the main difference between AIDS and Covid-19 in the public health messaging? There was almost six years between the first UK death and a government-funded health campaign. Six years. Sick minorities do not matter to a conservative (small c) government, or they certainly didn’t when it came to gay and bisexual men or people now defined as trans.

The Terrence Higgins Trust (THT) is now a sizeable national charity that, despite its good work, regularly earns the ire of the great and good in Brighton & Hove. How short our memories. Terrence Higgins was an individual gay man, known in his day as ‘Fat Terry’ on account of his body shape. You can always count on the gays to body shame and 40 years later at least we’re consistent. THT was set up by Terry’s mates after his death on account of a total lack of support for those affected by or living with and, regrettably, mostly dying from HIV/AIDS. Friends. Men, just blokes like me who, in the face of grief and despair, just wanted to do something to honour their friend and help those around them who were suffering.

When we see people running in the Brighton Marathon raising money for THT, how many of us spare a thought for Fat Terry? The gay bloke who died from AIDS-related complications in 1982. When those of us in our broadening communities are getting their knick-knack paddyclack in a fuddle over THT versus The Sussex Beacon, how many of us are really giving a monkeys about Fat Terry or any of the other individuals that make up the hundreds of thousands who suffered pain, prejudice and died terrible deaths amidst fear, blame and isolation? These men are our history and our middle-aged or millennial middle-class squabbles belittle them. Our LGBTQ+ history, whatever our age, sexual orientation, biological sex, gender identification, if we’re hoiking our asses to a collective today then without hesitation we are part of a shared yesterday. Know it, learn it, repeat it, and say their names. This is our history. And next time, when ordering PrEP online to ignore Covid-19 rules and use Grindr like an online Chinese-take-away menu for sex on demand, take a moment to thank all of those men who laid this ground. Jesus? Nah mate, it was normal blokes like Fat Terry who died for our sins.

And as for Keith Haring... every time you see something on a mug, a Valentine’s Day card or shitty £3 Primark T-shirt you’re wearing as a ‘Love Wins’ warrior, you should take a moment to think about the man who made it. Who despite sickness, community and societal alienation, extreme personal physical pain wanted to fight a real fight and use his art to act up and fight back.

Know your history, even the ugly bits. It’s who we are. All of us.
Rewriting history

I’m not usually one for an internet row, especially during a time where everyone is wound so tight the term ‘triggered’ is being thrown around like hand sanitiser, but the other day I found myself deep into a two-hour long row over something I found personally abhorrent.

Since the beginning of time people have speculated over other people’s sexuality, and described them to fit their narrative. It wasn’t so long ago that women who were quite obviously homosexual and happily partnered were being referred to as “Gal Pals”. How many times have you read something like: “Mildred’s family grew increasingly disappointed with her inability to choose a suitor, and eventually died an old maid by her best friend Gwen’s side with whom she lived for many years before her spinsters demise.” Woe betide them to see poor Mildred as happily partnered with a woman. They even found statues in Pompeii with the words “master and his slave died next to each other in an embrace”, when it was quite obvious the two men had been lovers.

“I am not sure whether this woman knew she was, in fact writing back to a gay woman, but bisexual erasure seems to be the only acceptable thing left to be homophobic about in the LGBTQ+ community”

The blind refusal to witness a homosexual relationship has plagued history for many years, and has thankfully reached an era where we can call a spade a spade, and no one really cares who you’re with, until I came across a seemingly innocuous Instagram page.

Interrupting my mindless scrolling was a post that read in bright red letters “Marilyn Monroe was a LESBIAN”. I looked at the source, which is one that I have followed for quite some time, and saw that this was a guest post from a page called Turn Lesbian Now!. I obviously thought that this was a clear attempt at satire, but upon reading the page, half shocked and half amused, I saw that it was run by two women who had many lovers which included both genders, and that this in the very least is bisexual erasure, I was met with an incredibly defensive woman who said that men are useless and that women do it better anyway so what does it matter.

Actually, I continued, it matters a lot. I am not sure whether this woman knew she was in fact writing back to a gay woman, but bisexual erasure seems to be the only acceptable thing left to be homophobic about in the LGBTQ+ community.

Here was a woman effectively rewriting people’s history to fit her own cause and her own experience, and isn’t that what homophobia is in the first place?

I wonder if when people are choosing how to rewrite their own history, does being authentic to oneself include trashing other sexualities? I sincerely hope not.

Icon

Poor Judy Garland, penniless with two children in tow, denied room at the inn because she hasn’t paid her bills. And she’s had a few, of course she just wants to lie down. This is how the recent biopic of her later life starts. Naturally, they take liberties to get the heart strings humming, but it certainly worked.

I wanted to find out more about this undisputed ultimate gay icon. Truth be told, I knew very little about her. I’ve watched The Wizard of Oz just once, and thought it was a waste of time. Too much singing and dancing and prancing about, not my bag. Yet hanging on the walls of as many gay bars as she does, this is the Judy I know. Do I know enough?

The boyfriend, being of a more traditional nature, sometimes likes to point out that I am too liberal in my columns, focused on the youth and the future. Don’t forget about the “old gays” and what they’ve fought for. That’s why you and I are here, he reminds me. So I promised that for this LGBTQ+ History Month edition, I’d look back.

So back to Judy, our icon. Young readers take note, because we’re all Friends of Dorothy after all. Over the decades gay men have sung Over the Rainbow, and donned that blue and white dress and the ruby slippers, and have fallen in love with her music. That is often where it ends, that’s what we know.

The film mentioned is superbly played – Renée Zellweger surely deserves that Oscar, but more so it opens your eyes to a life that ended in despair.

Judy Garland herself never won an Oscar. She was scared of flying, would have just as well have been a nurse, and that famous dress? Picked so the pattern’s blurring effect would make her look slimmer. And did she ever have to be slim! Those who remember, or have an interest in historic Hollywood, may be aware of the abuse (because that’s what we would call it today) the young Judy, or Frances, suffered at the hands of studio producers, fellow actors, even her mother and family. Pills. Addiction.

What would her status have meant to her I wonder? When asked by a reporter once what she thought of her gay following, she is said to have replied, “I couldn’t care less. I sing to people”.

Two of her five husbands were gay (or bisexual), it is alleged. One of her many suicide attempts happened when she found her husband, Vincente Minnelli, in bed with a man.

She may be a gay icon for her performances, her camp quality, or the Stonewall riots on the day of her funeral. Or because gay men often identify with those who have suffered. Whatever our reasons, it is heartbreaking that behind a screen of such fun and glamour and laughter there was such human misery.

So as we remember LGBTQ+ history, let’s remember the history of Judy, the human being, the next time we walk down the yellow brick road.
RAE’S REFLECTIONS
Celebrity bicons who taught me to embrace being queer, by Rachel Badham

1. Realising I’m pansexual was not an easy journey for me. In retrospect, it was always a part of my identity, but I didn’t realise I was queer until I developed a crush on a girl who sat next to me in my year 9 science class, who gave me butterflies and distracted from how painfully boring physics was. Despite my realisation, I struggled to actually accept my sexuality for many years, mostly due to internalised biphobia which developed as a result both of the negative stereotypes of bisexual/pansexual people, and the overall lack of bi+ representation in society. I’m incredibly lucky to have a family that’s so supportive of my identity, but I also wouldn’t have reached a place of self-acceptance without access to queer celebrity role models. Seeing other prominent figures openly discuss their bisexuality or pansexuality was critical for my self-confidence, and to this day nothing makes me happier than seeing the increasing number of people who are embracing their sexuality in both mainstream media and everyday life.

2. The first queer celebrity I felt an affinity with, and who played a pivotal role in my understanding and acceptance of my sexuality, is supermodel and actor Cara Delevingne. Cara has been my celebrity crush from the moment I saw her gracing magazine covers in the early 2010s, however one specific 2014 magazine cover sticks in my mind. I vividly remember seeing a lifestyle magazine with Cara’s face on it, and the caption read ‘people can judge me, but Michelle makes me happy’, referring to her past relationship with fellow queer actor Michelle Rodriguez. Seeing a woman I already admired so much speaking candidly about her queerness gave me a much-needed confidence boost in a time when I was struggling greatly with self-doubt. Cara has since come out as pansexual and received great recognition for her LGBTQ+ advocacy work, and to this day I consider her one of my queer role models.

3. I stumbled on to the work of singer and actor Janelle Monáe by accident, when the video for their 2018 song PYNK came up in my recommended YouTube videos; in the thumbnail Janelle was wearing a pair of trousers which resembled a vagina, so obviously, I clicked on the video. After falling in love with her music, I learnt that Janelle identifies as pansexual, and I adore how so many of her songs and music videos are explicitly queer. Her bisexual anthem, Make Me Feel, is a standout song in her discography where she refers to herself as a ‘sexual bender’ and is shown dancing with both men and women. Janelle has spoken out in support of equality throughout her career, particularly for the black LGBTQ+ community, and I admire her greatly for this. Her music saw me through several periods of intense insecurity and self-doubt, and I’d highly recommend her to anyone looking to discover more queer artists.

4. Actor Lili Reinhart is best known for her role as Betty in the hit Netflix show Riverdale, however she made headlines in 2020 after she came out as bisexual. I had great respect for her anyway, as she has been continuously vocal about pressing human rights issues. I don’t just admire her for speaking openly about her bisexuality, but for acknowledging how apparent biphobia continues to be in our society. When she first spoke about her sexuality, she said she had reservations about coming out as she had only been in public relationships with men, and was concerned the media would speculate about whether she was being sincere about her orientation. Lili’s courage to come out in spite of her fears, as well as her honesty about how societal biphobia affects queer people, was massively inspiring to me as someone who has grappled with biphobia for many years, and it was comforting to see that other queer people experience, but overcome, these anxieties.

5. A bisexual role model I only discovered this year is YouTube creator Jessie Paige who has spoken so openly about her journey of discovering her sexuality and coming out, and has made multiple songs about her sexuality, including my personal favourite, Not A Phase, which any bi+ person will feel a connection to if they’ve ever been told their identity is a phase they will grow out of. Jessie is also transparent about her struggles with mental illness, which tends to disproportionately affect LGBTQ+ people, and has been known to donate to The Trevor Project, an LGBTQ+ suicide prevention organisation. Her content is always honest and poignant, and just from looking at her comments sections, it is clear she is an inspiration to many people in the bi+ community.

6. While not specifically a celebrity, but certainly worthy of an honourable mention, Yorkie and Kelly (portrayed by Mackenzie Davis and Gugu Mbatha-Raw), the queer couple seen in Black Mirror’s San Junipero, were one of the first same-sex couples I saw on television depicting a relationship between a lesbian and a bisexual woman. I often felt as if whoever I was in a relationship with defined my sexuality, as it often did to the outside world, but seeing Kelly be so open about her bisexuality, regardless of her relationship status, was empowering to watch and inspired me to adopt a similar attitude. So, while they are a fictional couple, the impact they had on me was very real, as I think it was for many queer Black Mirror viewers considering how much praise the depiction of the pair received.
February has been LGBTQ+ History Month since 1994 although why we need to ‘celebrate’ it these days is a good question and anyone interested in gay history can easily find out. There is an awful lot of gay history going back thousands of years so perhaps the word ‘history’ is a misnomer in this connection but it’s now the name associated with February.

Along with Pride it’s another reason to raise awareness of the gay community and look back at the many high-profile people who have suffered for their sexuality. In these ‘enlightened’ times it shouldn’t be necessary but we all know that it is. It is incredible to think that there are still 73 countries in the world that criminalise all homosexual behaviour. It was only in 1967 that it was decriminalised in this country and any teaching about the subject is still violently disputed in many schools, admittedly in some very strong religious areas.

“Why is it so important to know who’s sleeping with who, do we or should we care? The answer is obvious to most of us but not to everyone even in our enlightened Western society”

It is rumoured that many famous names in history had comfortable same-sex relationships – Julius Caesar, William Shakespeare, King Richard I, King James I, Leonardo and many more... Of course there was no social media in their day so all we have to go on is some very good evidence from contemporary writers. The list goes on most famously with Alan Turing being chemically castrated in 1952 for being gay under the 1885 Act. Never forget Oscar Wilde and Reading Gaol.

Looking back from our lofty position of civilised acceptance, this all seems quite ridiculous. Why is it so important to know who’s sleeping with who, do we or should we care? The answer is obvious to most of us but not to everyone even in our enlightened Western society.

When did all this start? No one really knows, there’s some evidence of same-sex relationships as far back as 10,000 BC, if rock drawings are to be believed and of course the Phoenicians, the Greeks and the Romans were famous for their gay relationships and it was accepted in the higher levels of society.

It is notable that lesbians have been given a pretty easy ride throughout history, culminating of course in Queen Victoria’s famous belief that women were incapable of such things whereas of course men were capable of almost anything. It has been reported that when she was given the law to approve making homosexuality of both sexes illegal, it was her opinion that such things would be a physical impossibility between women, so the law was never passed. She was deeply in love with Prince Albert, hence her nine children.

We have come a long way, so much so that even the British Library has run workshops on how to find LGBTQ+ identities in standard archives (to no one’s surprise - there’s no queer subsection you can simply skip to).

So possibly there is a place for February being LGBTQ+ History Month after all.

For those familiar with the chronicles of early faiths it will come as no surprise that there’s not one St Valentine, the patron saint of lovers, epileptics and beekeepers, but at least a dozen. Including one who was Pope and a female St Valentina. African, Roman, Umbrian or lip-syncing Puerto Rican, none of the Valentines seems to have been a romantic. This might go some way to explain why there are so many relics or ‘holy bits and bobs’ of St Val scattered across Europe. Churches in Madrid, Dublin, Malta, Glasgow, and Lesbos all lay claim to withered body parts, housed in absurdly ornate baroque reliquaries which would cause Antiques Road Show experts to swoon. Touching his remains was said to halt fires, prevent epidemics, and cure demonic possession – how might it affect Fiona Bruce? Certainly useful to have a half-used pot of St Valentine under the kitchen sink for emergencies.

It’s a short hop from a baker’s dozen of beheaded Christian martyrs to Hallmark cards via Pope Gelasius (raspberry flavour), who dedicated February 14 to the martyr Valentine, replacing the traditional pagan feast Lupercalia, which originated as a ritual in a rural masculine cult, often with dogs and goats being sacrificed. This fertility festival was in honour of the god Faunus and his Werewolf friend Lupa. During the middle ages the bardic interventions of poet Geoffrey Chaucer, who was fond of a filthy limerick and lascivious love note, brings us ‘Seynt Volantynys day’. It seems that, in Chaucer’s day, English birds paired off to produce eggs in February, and this gave him an opportunity to try his luck with any passing ‘wenche’ and invent a new ‘love day’. Add in the rather unpleasant cherub ‘Cupid’, aka Eros, an immortal who played with the emotions, swiping golden arrows right to incite love and leaden ones left to sow aversion and we are almost there.

So, if you really want to authentically celebrate Valentine’s Day in all its truthful glory, then strip down naked with a couple of blokes and tie yourself into a thrupple, wrap a sacrificed goatskin around your shoulder, although as they are pretty hard to come by in lockdown, I’m sure some leftover fake fur from Pride will do. Then, in this updated version of a three-legged race, run the length of St James’ St, whipping ladies as you go and staggering any pregnant ones with thongs cut from the skins of newly killed goats.

These ladies will have helpfully dipped themselves in milk and put sprigs of thyme through their hair, rather a fetching look for New Steine in February one suspects. While this marathon of masculinity is underway we will need the child of a beekeeper (I know, keep up) who will pair couples at random, to live together and be intimate for an entire year in order to fulfil the fertility rite, so far so Channel 4. Phew.

This year, due to Miss Rona’s Rigorous Restrictions we are gonna be spared the annual hetero-worshipping cult, of love so you may want to share some light expressions of platonic devotion with a queer friend instead. I know it’s not as much fun as an edible G-string or a dozen red roses produced unsustainably in an over exploited north African nation, but there we are.

Sadly, a bit like Santa, St Val was struck from the list of proper saints in 1669 because of so little factual proof (a bit like Sherry Pie/Season 12 of Drag Race), so this Valentine’s Day we’ll just have to be exquisite and never explain.
GREEN LOVING

Well, it's February so it's a bit like dreary o'clock! You should really get round to sorting out your seeds, both what you have and what you need so when you have decided exactly how you are going to organise your plot you know what you are doing. It is a good idea (and I know from bitter experience) to write your labels before you plant. It is also the time for digging in compost and manure and other fibrous stuff that will enrich your soil. Have you got anything that needs ericaceous compost, like blueberries for example, or decorative camellias that may need a boost? Seed potatoes are now available in the garden centres as are onion sets, garlic etc.

Brussels sprouts (if we are still allowed to call them that!) will be much better now they have been out in the frost. Mine have been a little bit sad this year but we have taken to cooking their heads in the way you would cook cabbage or chard, give them a few minutes longer as they can be a bit tough.

Our leeks have done well this year; they make a tasty alternative to an onion in a chicken risotto. Tina cooks a splendid risotto – I would say it was a 'signature dish' but Tina doesn't do pretension. My cabbages are rather impressive and they're great shredded in a minestrone or sautéed with a small amount of olive oil, crushed garlic, some mustard, a knob of butter and a tsp of that leftover cranberry sauce.

The chard is still going strong and is great stirred through a stroganoff or any rice dish with the possible exception of rice pudding.

As St Valentine's Day is coming up, had you thought of an edible bouquet for your beloved?

Thanks as always to Donald (King Weed) & Tina Thyme without whom...
Inclusive, affirming space where all are invited to come as they are to explore their spirituality without judgement.
01273 515572 or info@mccbrighton.org.uk
www.mccbrighton.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/pair 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 LGBTQ+ communities in Brighton, Hove and Sussex. Rainbow Hub drop in at: 9 St James Street, BN2 1TP 01273 675445 or visit www.therainbowhubbrighton.com

Some People
Social/support group for LGBTQ or questioning aged 14-19, Tue 5-30-7.30pm, Hastings. Call/text Catherine Connoly 0797 3255076 or email somepeople@eastsussex.gov.uk

TAGS – The Arun Gay Society

Victim Support
Practical, emotional support for victims of crime 08453 899 528

The Village MCC

HIV Prevention, Care & Treatment Services

AVERT
Sussex HIV 1230202 or 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 & 020 7582 8090 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.brightonsexhealth.org.uk

Lawson Unit
Medical advice, treatment for HIV+; specialist clinics, diet & welfare advice, drug trials. 01273 664 722

Martin Fisher Foundation

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, 9 The Drive, 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 gsmith@pavilions.org.uk www.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 THF 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

Netreach (online/mobile app outreach in Brighton & Hove): info/advice on HIV/sexual/local services. THF Brighton Outreach workers online on Grindr, Scruff, & Squirt

Condom Male: discreet, confidential service posts free condoms/lube/ssexual 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: M-F 10am-8pm, Sat-Thurs 10am-1pm (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)

Face2Face: 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. 1-2-1 appts for advice & workshops on key benefits

Terrence Higgins Eastbourne
Web support & info on HIV, sexual health & local services via netreach and www.myhiv.org.uk

Free condom postal service contact Grace Coughlan on 07584086590 or grace.coughlan@tht.org.uk

Sexual Health Worthing
Free confidential tests & treatment for STIs inc HIV; Hep vaccines, Worthing-based 0845 111345645

National Helplines

National LGBT Domestic Abuse Helpline at www.galop.org.uk and 0800 999 5428

Switchboard 0300 330 0660

Positiveline (Eddie Sumran Trust) Mon-Fri 11am-10pm, Sat & Sun 4-10pm 0800 1696806

Mainliners 0207 8525226

National AIDS Helpline 08005 761213

National Drugs Helpline 0800 766000

THT AIDS Treatment phoneline 08450 740047

THT direct 0845 1221200

https://navigatebrighton.wordpress.com/