

SEPTEMBER 15, 2020 • VOL XI • ISSUE #19

# GRAB MAGAZINE

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## BILLY PORTER

BLACK, GAY, AND  
OUT OF  
F\*CKS



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**3712 N. BROADWAY #315**  
**CHICAGO, IL 60613**  
**TEL: 773-515-0293**  
**WWW.GRABCHICAGO.COM**  
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# GRAB

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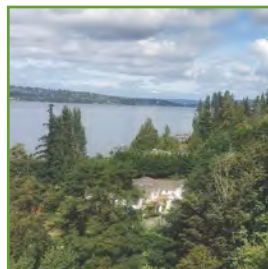
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### **Publisher**

Stacy Bridges

### **Contributors**

Chris Azzopardi  
 Roger V. McCaffrey-Boss  
 Owen Keehnen  
 Erik Sosa-Kibby  
 Holly Maholm  
 Jerry Nunn  
 Tom Olah  
 Gregg Shapiro  
 Dylan Seitz

### **Production**

Stacy Bridges  
 James Gumb

### **Photography**

Bear Lens Photography

### **Sales**

Erik Sosa-Kibby  
 Judy Kyle

### **Public Relations**

Nick Wille

### **NATIONAL SALES**

### **REPRESENTATIVE**

RIVENDELL MEDIA  
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**In Memorium**  
**Mark Nagel (Co-Founder)**  
 1961 - 2019

**Cover:**  
**Billy Porter**  
*Photo By*  
**Shavonne Wong**



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## GRAB BILLY

# Billy Porter: Black, Gay, and Out of F\*cks *Pose* powerhouse on his Black queer experience, upcoming memoir and finally feeling like he's made it

By Chris Azzopardi

"Now that I have a massive platform, and now that the people want to listen to the Black sissy, I'm gonna talk," Billy Porter says, fired up, leaning into the camera. On Zoom, Porter commands a computer screen like he does a red carpet.

In this particular moment, his fiery passion stems from a call he received from screenwriter-actress Lena Waithe, who raised an eyebrow after Porter made history as *Essence's* first openly gay man to grace the magazine's cover. Porter says Waithe got him on the phone to talk about the anonymous letter written by current and former *Essence* staffers calling themselves "Black Female Anonymous." The letter was published on Medium on June 28 and called out the magazine for its toxic work environment, just before Porter's cover story hit newsstands. "I had to stop her," he says. "I said, 'I hear you, I see you, I feel you.'"

But Porter simply didn't know about the letter, he says. Until she called, he hadn't even seen it. "I don't give a fuck about social media," he scoffs, talking about his refusal to be engaged on social platforms. "I don't adjudicate my life or humanity in sound bites on social media. I don't fight with nobody, I don't have Twitter fights."

The reason, he says, is "I'm 50 years old. Everybody has to remember that I built a career *before* social media."

Porter's mainstream breakthrough, playing ball emcee Pray Tell on FX's trans-centric series *Pose*, is an accumulation of dedication to his craft as a singer and actor that began in his 20s in his hometown of Pittsburgh. He released solo albums that weren't widely known. He met music industry standards for Black artists (you had to be R&B). And then, later, he dismantled

those standards (he could sing show tunes, and did). In 2013, he originated the role of Lola in *Kinky Boots*, which led to both a Tony and Grammy award.

In September 2019, Porter made history as the first openly Black gay man to win in any lead acting category at the Emmys for his role on *Pose*. Though winners won't be announced until Sept. 20, Porter recently received another nomination for his portrayal of Pray Tell.

Despite the pandemic, Porter is remaining prolific. He recorded an updated version of the 1966 protest song "For What It's Worth," which he performed on the first night of the Democratic National Convention, to address our current political landscape; he's also featured on The Shapeshifters' disco number "Finally Ready," which reflects, in part, his decades-long journey living through the AIDS crisis. He's writing two books, his memoir and a children's picture book. He also has starring roles in two upcoming films: a live-action *Cinderella* remake, as the Fairy Godmother, and in *out Love*, *Simon* director Greg Berlanti's



Photo By Shavonne Wong

big-screen take on *Little Shop of Horrors*.

My recent interview with Porter was scheduled as an audio-only Zoom call, but because not even Porter's handlers can stop Porter from setting his own rules, he appears on video in a caftan, casually eating in a rented beach house. A bag with "Vote Betches" written on it is propped up in back of him. Expecting to see none of this, I'm in the clothes I went to bed in: a tank top and sweat



A promotional image for Sidetrack Chicago. In the foreground, two clear plastic cups filled with shaved ice sit on a metal table. The cup on the left contains bright red shaved ice, while the one on the right contains a lighter pink version. Both are topped with a single red cherry and have a black straw. The background features a colorful, out-of-focus fence made of vertical wooden slats in various colors like blue, yellow, red, and green. The Sidetrack logo is prominently displayed in the upper center.

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shorts, with a hat I threw on. I tell Porter that I thought this was an audio-only interview. Porter responds incredulously; he can't understand why anyone in their right mind would *not* use the video feature. "We have Zoom! Why are we not doing Zoom?"

I leap out of my computer chair and run to the closet in back of me, throwing on the first shirt I see. I realize in that moment that Emmy winner Billy Porter is watching me get dressed. "There is no need for you to put a shirt on for me," he says with a playful smirk.

It's early July when we speak, and our interview knows no bounds: from Buddhism, which Porter practices now, to how, even with notoriety, Porter still experiences racism in his everyday life, especially from those within the LGBTQ community. He laid bare his beliefs and opinions, and went off on a variety of other topics too because talking about them, he says, with a rip-roaring laugh, "helps me stay sane."

**Chris Azzopardi: I read that you've gotten into Buddhism.**

**Billy Porter:** Lightly. I'm still learning.

**CA: What have you learned, and what drew you to the practice?**

**BP:** What has drawn me to the practice is that it's a revolt against religion. Religion is man-made. Spirituality is divine. All of the wars that have existed in this world, all of the bullshit that we go through, is in the name of somebody's man-made God. And I'm over it. I'm just over it.

I grew up in the Pentecostal Church. They systematically taught parishioners how to hate, disguising it through Bible verses. We're living in a country right now that is being run by people who say they're Christians and believe in Jesus and God, and they're letting people die in the streets. That is not God. That is not Jesus. Y'all can take your Bibles and your religion and shove it. I am so done.

I had people actually say to me back in the day that they were voting for Trump because of his religious values. That motherfucker has been in the church three times, for his three marriages. That's it. And yet we still sit here every single day and talk about morals. I can't do it anymore.

Buddhism says life is suffering. That's useful to me. You're not going to get out of life without suffering. That takes me to radical acceptance, that takes me to radical compassion, which allows for me to have a foundation where I can feel what I feel and simultaneously be empowered to be a



*Photo Courtesy of Into Action*

part of a movement for something different. Otherwise, I am useless.

**CA: You're a success story. And despite your success and the fact that you are an openly gay leading man and you've won major awards and shattered the glass ceiling for queer Black people, you're still a gay Black man in America right now.**

**BP:** I'm Black first. Which I have to remind my own people of, by the way. But keep going. Ask me the question.

**CA: What experiences of yours as a Black gay man might surprise people who look at you and think, "He's famous, he's good, he doesn't have anything to worry about?"**

**BP:** We were out on Long Island and we were meeting some friends of ours for a

social-distance walk at this place called the Hog Farm. I pulled in with my husband (Adam Smith). It looked like private property to me. No signs, no real parking lot. There was a farm stand. It looked like a farmer's market, and there was no one there. And my friends weren't there and they texted and said they were late. So we sat there for a minute. Then out of nowhere a little white girl comes flouncing out, and she looks around and sees the car, and then she goes back to wherever she came from. I don't know where it was. I didn't see any doors. I didn't know what was going on, but I was immediately filled with anxiety because: Where is she going? Where is this little white girl going? And who is she telling that there's a Black man sitting out front on our property in a BMW? Never mind my



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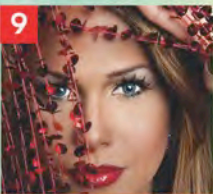
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white husband beside me. There's a Black man. That's where I live. Every day, all day. That's *before* the gay. So I deal with that, and then I turn around and my own people are just as violent toward me.

So, I've never had anywhere to go. I've never really had a place where I have felt comfortable and embraced fully by any community. The racism that exists in the LGBTQ community is at the top of the list. They're fucking racists just like everybody else. Inside that community, there's racism. And inside the Black community, there's homophobia.

**CA: Where are you going now as far as music? What do you listen to get you through the moment and help you recharge?**

**BP:** I'm in the middle of trying to figure out what that is. Music was and still is very healing to me. As I reenter the mainstream music market, I'm going back to disco, back to house, back to '70s funk.

**CA: Sylvester?**

**BP:** Sylvester. I'm trying to pick up the torch from where he left off when he passed way too soon. Because there's something healing inside of that energy, inside of that space as a 50-year-old Black man who came out in the '80s. We went to the clubs to find fellowship, we went to the clubs to heal collectively, we went to the clubs to party on the weekends so that we could shake the terror and the anxiety and the pain of just having gone to five memorials that week for friends who passed away in their 20s, in a world where nobody cared about you. The government didn't care about us. (They thought) we deserved to die simply because of who we are. Something about this coronavirus is mirroring it,

mirroring that, giving me a lot of anxiety, a lot of PTSD.

**CA: The last time we spoke, you told me you were working on a contemporary gospel-musical about your experience of surviving the AIDS epidemic.**

**BP:** I am still.

**CA: As you work on that while living through another pandemic, what is**

"It's still Republican, it's still white, and whatever he's doing, he's doing what we want to get done so it's not so bad. We'll just deal with him for four years, get all of this shit we want to get done, done: appointing the courts, taking away healthcare from citizens, rolling back all of the work that we've fought for the last 400 years. Let's just roll all of that back. Because we know we can't stop it, but we can roll it back enough that it will take another 40 years to get back to where we've already gotten, or more. So let's just roll everything back." He represented that to white people.

**CA: It was at the expense of anyone who's not a white straight man in this country.**

**BP:** Right. So he can look at this administration and have the anemic response that he had and allow this country to continue to sink because in the sinking, whatever it was, whatever this bitch does, was never gonna affect him.

Now we're 50 million unemployed, motherfuckers are in the street every day, 60,000 cases of the virus that could have been contained, and in an economy that's tanking but we're still, in our whiteness, talking about books on the news that are written about him by his niece.

**CA: In 2014, I asked you if you were the kind of artist you want to be. You said, "I'm not sure that there is ever a scenario where I will feel like I have arrived or like I've made**

**it." Can you answer that more definitively now?**

**BP:** Yeah. I have made it. I'm leaning into that, with as much grace and humility as I can. And I'm trying to use the space that I've created for myself to re-enter the music industry in the mainstream on my terms. That's what I'm working on. And the two singles that I have out right now, which may seem diametrically opposed, are exactly who I



Photo By Shavonne Wong

**that experience like for you?**

**BP:** I am just trying to get a handle on the full landscape. This time it's different. And first of all, the reason why we're in the position that we're in in terms of this pandemic is due to whiteness. It's due to white supremacy. It's due to the fact that everybody knew going in that Orangetown 45 was not the choice. But whiteness overrode any consequences – that's not quite the word. It overrode anything, because,



am.

**CA: “For What It’s Worth” was written in 1966, but is obviously still relevant today. What memory do you have of hearing Buffalo Springfield’s version for the first time?**

**BP:** It’s so ubiquitous, I don’t have a memory of the first time. It’s everywhere, it’s always been everywhere. Any war movie you watch, that’s what they play. It’s just been that for the whole time. So I don’t have a first time, but I do know when my manager suggested it I had to look at it and look at the lyrics and figure out, because I hadn’t really listened to the lyrics: What does this mean to me today? How do we take this song and make sure we’re speaking in the present? And not just as an observer, because it’s a very observational lyric, but how do we ignite the spirit of engagement and change with this song? And so that was the goal for that one. I recorded that the day after the Emmys, before all of this mess was happening. So my goal was to always have this ready for this political season.

**CA: The time seems ripe for an entire Billy Porter protest album. Have you considered recording one?**

**BP:** There is no music from Billy Porter without hope and without protest. It all is that. And I’m working on that new album right now. I’m signing a new deal right now. And I have some shit to say. It’ll be protest, it’ll be dance, it’ll be love, it’ll be all of it. Because those are all the things that I am. I no longer have to compartmentalize the wholeness and the fullness of myself anymore. I don’t have to do that anymore.

**CA: What advice do you have for Black LGBTQ people who are still pushing against an oppressive society that doesn’t allow them to be exactly who they want to be?**

**BP:** Don’t wait for anybody to give you permission to be who you are. Just be it. Just be it and let those motherfuckers catch up. I said, “When you catch up, you’ll figure it out.” But that’s not my journey. Y’all need to catch up. I’m not the problem. We have to stop thinking that we’re the problem. We’re made to feel like we’re the problem and we need to be fixed. No. Y’all are the problem. If you have a problem with my authenticity, that’s your stuff that I will no longer take on or receive, and I’m going to make sure that I sit in the

fullness of myself and give that 100 percent, no matter where the chips may fall.

And I’m living proof that that actually works out. It’s not fast. It’s not always fast. And I think that’s a lot of the problem: that we have gotten more and more microwavable in the way we live, in our expectations. We live this microwaved life; everything is instantaneous. It’s like, I’m 50 fucking years old, y’all. I’ve been doing this since 1985.

**CA: Do people realize that you had to put that time in before you became Emmy winner Billy Porter?**

**BP:** No, they don’t. Because I’m Black and Black don’t crack. It’s all good. But like, no, I’m 50. And as a result of that I

have no more time to give any fucks about what other people think about what I’m doing. I don’t have time. I am middle-aged! Ha! I have to say exactly what I want to say and do exactly what I want to do. Period.

**CA: Reflecting on *Kinky Boots* and *Pose*, how do you think those projects changed the conversation when it comes to LGBTQ communities of color?**

**BP:** Well, there are Black people in these spaces. When the LGBTQ stories started being told in the mainstream, it was all about white people. Always. I’m still waiting for my guest spot on *Will & Grace*. Still.

**CA: Have you auditioned?**

Photo By Shavonne Wong





**BP:** Never a call, never a thought. Never anything. I'm not saying this because I'm angry about it or I'm trying to call them out or anything. We write what we know, and what those white people knew was white people and that's what they wrote about. So now, I'm in a position of power and I'm gonna write about my people. I'm going to do it about *myself*.

**CA:** You wrote a TV pilot.

**BP:** I've written several things, but yes, most recently I've written a pilot. I'm writing my memoir. It's in my hands. I can't wait for other people to give me permission, I can't wait for other people in positions of power to validate me. I can't wait to be invited to the table. I'm at the table. I crashed the party. I'm at the table. Here I am.

**CA:** That's how you got to where you are – you *kept* crashing the table.

**BP:** I crashed the party. I crashed the dinner party. And I'ma keep doing that.

**CA:** I think the deadline for the memoir is in October, right?

**BP:** You really do your research.

**CA:** What can you share about it with me at this point?

**BP:** It's in transition. What's really interesting is that, because of COVID, because of the lockdown, because of the work that I've been doing in lockdown on myself, it's not a memoir just about recounting my disappointments and my successes. It's deeper than that. And I'm trying to figure out what that is. And I'm just trying to allow myself to let it come and not be so Virgo about it, so planned about it. It's like, yeah, I wrote the proposal; but what I'm feeling in my spirit is connected to that but also much deeper and much different than what it originally started out to be. So I'm literally in the space of trying to just let it come.

**CA:** Is it tough to keep up with what's happening internally at this moment while working to meet your October deadline, as we move through the Black Lives Matter movement?

(Sarcastically.) Oh, it was easier to deal with it until you have brought it up three times today.

**CA:** I've triggered you is what you're saying.

**BP:** Yes, you have! No, it's all good. I'm just trying to be compassionate with myself and give myself the space to be wherever I am emotionally – to be wherever I am spiritually, to be wherever

I am creatively and move through it, not compartmentalize it, not put the pain away, not ignore it. None of that. Move right directly through all of it. That's what I'm trying to do.

**CA:** You recently got some backlash for telling Black people to stop killing Black trans people. How do you respond to those who have an issue with what you said?

**BP:** The African American community's relationship to the LGBTQ community is horrible. It always has been. The Black community is the most homophobic, in my experience, and so the backlash was not a surprise to me. And I was called out by some friends – some really lovely friends – who said in this moment of heightened sensitivity the specificity of language is very important. I said "Black people." I didn't say *homophobic* Black people. I didn't say homophobic, transphobic and xenophobic Black people. So I actually recorded an addendum to my message so that I could deal with the semantics of that. Even though y'all know what I'm talking about, I will deal with the semantics of it in this moment.

Please understand: I hear you, I will be more specific on who I'm calling out. I'm calling out homophobic, transphobic and xenophobic Black people who are in the streets killing their own. That's who I'm calling out. And I meant it. I am comparing it to white supremacy. I am because it is. Everybody has to look in the mirror at themselves. We all have to

do it. We all have blind spots. The blind spot in the African American community, one of them, is that. It is. I created a simple do-onto-others metaphor that people had problems with. If you have a problem with it, you need to look at yourself and ask yourself why you have a problem with that.

One of the things my friend told me – because I don't read comments – was that with all of the pushback, there was pushback to the pushback, (people) saying, "But did he lie?" That was a phrase that I heard that kept coming up in these comments when people were trying to drag me. I'm not lying. Deal with it however you want to. But this is the truth. And I'm a truth-teller.

Photo By Shavonne Wong





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# GRAB JAY

FILM

## Fostering hope: An interview with Jay Paul Deratany

By Gregg Shapiro

On September 16, 2020 at 7:30 pm, Chi-Town Movies Drive-In, 2343 S. Throop Street in Pilsen, via partnership with Elevated Films and Music Box Theatre, presents an exclusive pre-premiere screening of the award-winning legal drama **Foster Boy**. Attorney and 2020 Chicago LGBT Hall of Fame inductee **Jay Paul Deratany** wrote the *Foster Boy* screenplay, which was co-executive produced by Shaquille O'Neal, and stars Matthew Modine, Shane Paul McGhie, Louis Gossett Jr., Amy Brenneman, Julie Benz and other familiar actors. Part of the proceeds from ticket sales will be donated to two local charities supporting foster children: Families Helping Families Chicagoland and One Hope United. For more information on the screening and the movie, visit <http://www.fosterboy.com>. Deratany

was gracious enough to answer a few questions in advance of the screening.

**Gregg Shapiro: I'd like to begin by congratulating you on being a 2020 inductee into Chicago's LGBT Hall of Fame. What does the honor mean to you?**

**Jay Paul Deratany:** Thank you. It's an incredible honor, and one that I will forever cherish. As a child growing up in a tough area of Detroit, I heard the most awful and homophobic statements about LGBTQ people. I thought I would never come out, never have my "own" gay identity and certainly never be celebrated for my contributions, so this shows me how far we have all come and though we have to continue the fight for the rights of all, so too we can celebrate how far we have come.

**GS: Foster Boy is a courtroom drama. Do you think a courtroom drama is a natural choice for a screenplay by a lawyer?**

**JPD:** I do [laughs]. It's kind of natural isn't it? I write about human rights issues quite a bit, especially LGBTQ issues, and they often have court fights at the center. I have been fighting in a courtroom for a long time, so it is a natural place for me to go to in my writing.

**GS: Do you have a personal**

**favorite courtroom drama?**

**JPD:** The Verdict with Paul Newman is my favorite, hands down. But, of course, more recently there are so many good courtroom dramas; The Rainmaker, and for humor, My Cousin Vinny.

**GS: Have you known judges like George Taylor (played by Louis Gossett Jr.) in your law career?**

**JPD:** As a matter of fact, I have. Judge Bill Taylor was a judge I frequently encountered right here in Illinois, and he recently retired from the appellate court. He was fair, just, and smart as hell and an inspiration to all lawyers. Other great Illinois Judges are Liz Budzinski and Lorna Propes. All will be tough, but fair. There are a lot of great judges out there.

**GS: What was it like to hear the words you wrote coming out of the mouths of actors such as Louis Gossett Jr., Matthew Modine, Amy Brenneman, Julie Benz, Evan Handler and other recognizable actors?**

**JPD:** It was incredible! Truly, to hear Evan Handler play the opposing counsel was just chillingly superb. I have to say being on set with all these actors was one of the best memories. This was not a huge budget film, so all



Jay Paul Deratany





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of these really accomplished actors did it for the love of the cause and hopefully the script. That's what they told me, and I believe it. Also, there were surprisingly no egos. I really mean that. They were so easy to work with. They were patient, devoted, dedicated, and truly concerned about foster care. Amy is so very kind, and Julie pulled me to the side and asked how she could do more; Matthew and I have become close friends, and well Lou, jeez what do you say about Lou Gossett Jr.? He is so kind, gentle, professional and caring. He has a big heart and is so down to earth. Also, let's not forget the new very handsome and talented young man, Shane McGhie, whose performance is riveting. When he breaks down you could hear a pin drop on set. He was that talented. I really could not have been happier with any cast. So, I should give a shout out to our casting director Robert Ulrich.

**GS: Speaking of words, there's a scene where Jamal raps his testimony. Please say a few words about the process of creating Jamal's verses.**

**JPD:** I have to give credit to the writers



*Matthew Modine and Shane Paul McGhie*

of that verse and the director Youssef Delara, and Shane Paul McGhie because they really wrote that verse. I might have played with a few words but they were the main writers. I know they spent a lot of time and Shane went to visit foster kids at a charity that I and one of the other producers, Peter Samuelson, were involved with, so that he could really feel them.

**GS: Is there a lawyer that we see onscreen who has some Jay Paul Deratany in them?**

**JPD:** People ask me that and I would say perhaps a "tiny bit" of Matthew Modine's character (Michael Trainer) is me, but really not much. The love of the court, the love of the fight on behalf of a client – that's perhaps where we intersect. But I wrote Michael's character as a flawed, very stifled conservative corporate lawyer who does not really see or trust people of color, and that is not me. I'm a liberal, trial lawyer – but I had to create a character with more conflict. In essence, Michael and Jamal have to

start to see each other, get over their racial prejudices so that they can win. Interestingly, people would call this the opposite of the "white savior" film, because (and without giving too much away) we see Jamal really heal Michael and then also help his own case

*Louis Gossett Jr*



**GS: The foster care system is at the center of Foster Boy. Do you think there is any chance that damages done to the system can be repaired?**

**JPD:** A resounding yes. It is not too late, or I would not have written this film, nor would I continue to advocate on behalf of foster kids. Also, interestingly the LGBTQ community can be and really is, a big part of helping the foster kids in this country. There are some easy fixes that can start the repair: insure that foster kids have a lawyer in family court so that they can have some say in their placement; pay social workers a proper salary and make sure that licensed



professional social workers are caring for our kids not people who have no training (as is often the case); limit caseloads to 15; eliminate for-profit foster care companies!

GS: How did Shaquille O'Neal become involved as an executive producer?

JPD: One of the producers asked! Peter Samuelson introduced me to MaryBeth O'Connor, who became a producer and is working with Shaq on another project. Shaq is cool and is all about helping others. I explained why I was doing Foster Boy and he not only said yes, but he said "This isn't big enough. We need to do a series." So, stay tuned for an announcement about the series Foster Boy, which, fingers crossed, should be happening soon.

GS: Have you started thinking about or working on your next writing project?

JPD: I have actually been working for some time on a musical called The CiviliTy of Albert Cashier – the T is

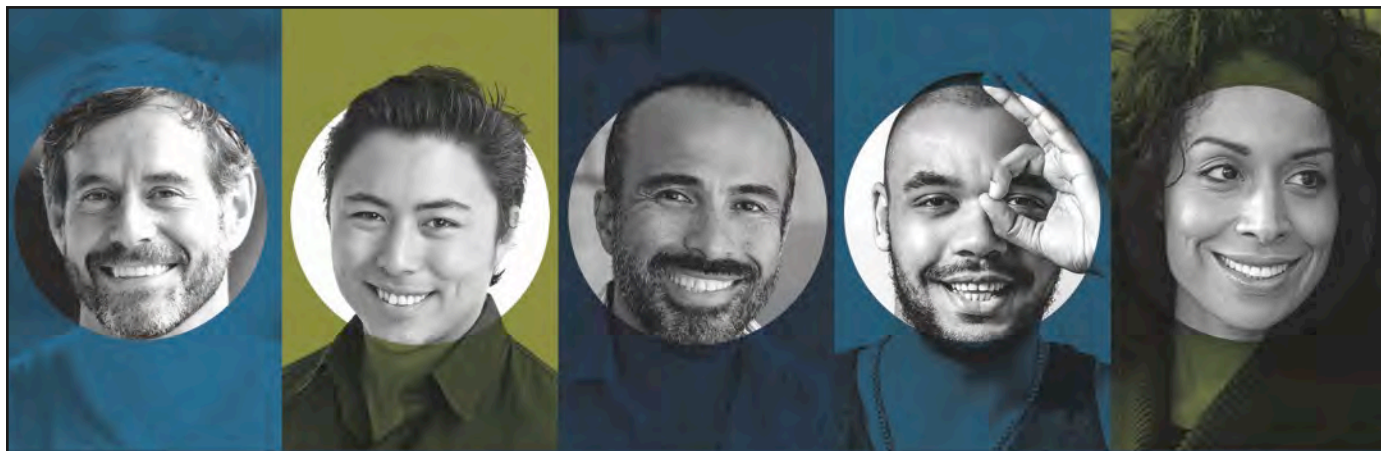
deliberately capitalized – about a war hero who fought in more than 40 battles in the Civil War, who was born female and then signed up for the Union in Illinois as a man. Albert is not talked about in the history books – of course, because they are too white male, straight centric – but truly saved the day in many battles. We have two fantastic composers and the show has already

played in Chicago as a non-equity (production), and went to the New York New Musical Festival, won three Jeff Awards and we are prepping it for an equity run in L.A. and a Broadway run thereafter.

**For more information on the screening and the movie, visit <http://www.fosterboy.com>**



*Julie Benz*



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## GRAB A FILM



Opening Night Film  
"Breaking Fast"

## REELING: THE 38th CHICAGO LGBTQ+ INTERNATIONAL FILM FESTIVAL

**Reeling38 will include 38 programs presented online between September 24 and October 4 for its first ever Virtual Festival**

Reeling will celebrate its 38th anniversary this fall with a new virtual edition of the second-oldest LGBTQ+ film festival in the world. Showing 30 features, 54 shorts across eight shorts programs from 21 countries, Reeling will offer home viewers access to new films not currently available on commercial streaming platforms. Over the course of 11 days – from September 24 to October 4 – new titles will be premiered each day of the festival on Reeling's online platform. Each film program will be viewable for a total of four days. Feature films may be viewed by audiences in Illinois, while short films will be available to audiences in the U.S. Virtual Q&As with filmmakers will be an integral part of the event, and this year's festival will host more Q&As with film directors,

producers, writers and actors than ever before. The schedule of live and pre-recorded streaming events will be announced in mid-September.

### OPENING & CLOSING FILMS

Reeling38's official Opening Night film is the romantic love story **Breaking Fast**, starring Haaz Sleiman (*The Visitor*) as Mo, a Muslim doctor living in West Hollywood, who tries to resist the charm of Kal (Michael Cassidy), a charismatic non-Muslim he meets at a party and who surprises him by offering to break fast with him during the holy month of Ramadan. Growing closer over their meals together, where food preparation and consumption becomes almost as sensual as sex, they soon find that differences between them threaten to keep their relationship from moving forward. Through these two

characters, director Mike Mosallam (who directed the 2015 short film on which the feature is based) delves into Muslim-American culture with a tenderness and wit that comes from the heart.

Closing the festival is **Ahead of the Curve**, the fascinating story of Curve magazine's dynamic publisher Franco Stevens, one of the most influential women in lesbian history whose work continues to have an impact today. Armed with her winnings from a lucky run at the horse track, Franco launched Curve magazine to make lesbians visible in all their beauty. Decades later, after a disabling injury, and as her legacy lies on the brink of extinction, she sets out to understand current visibility work led by a number of queer women of color. Directed by actress,





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producer and director, Jen Rainin, featuring Kim Katrin, Amber Hikes, Andrea Pino-Silva and Melissa Etheridge, among others, and scored by the phenomenal Meshell Ndegeocello (10-time Grammy nominee), **Ahead of the Curve** celebrates the history of a movement while assessing the viability of its future.

#### DOCUMENTARY HIGHLIGHTS

American novelist Truman Capote (In Cold Blood and Breakfast at Tiffany's) is the subject of **The Capote Tapes**, a tantalizing new documentary built around never-before-seen interviews with Capote's friends, including his assistant, Kate Harrington, whose father was his lover, along with snippets of home movies, TV appearances and unflattering portrayals of New York's jet-set society. The film also sheds new light on the mystery surrounding Capote's final uncompleted novel, *Answered Prayers*. Ebs Burnough, former White House deputy social secretary and senior advisor to Michelle Obama, directs this U.K.-based documentary.

Also from the U.K. comes director Posy Dixon's *Keyboard Fantasies: The Beverly Glenn-Copeland Story*, which follows the re-discovery of the music of Glenn-Copeland, a sci-fi and technology-obsessed musician whose folk-electronic album "Keyboard Fantasies" went unnoticed when it was released in 1986. Previously living as an out lesbian at a time when it was still illegal, and the only Black classical music student at McGill Music Academy in Canada in the 1960s, he eventually came to realize he was



**Ahead of the Curve**

transgender. Glenn-Copeland's work is given new life when an avid rare-record collector helps to generate interest among a new generation of fans.

#### U.S. FEATURES

The experience of transgender people in America is illuminated in this year's festival through the comedy web series **These Them**s and the gritty documentary **Pier Kids**. Created by and starring Gretchen Wylder, who has been called a queer Lucille Ball, *These Them*s centers on the experiences of trans and nonbinary people of color navigating the worlds of dating and working in New York City. As an ensemble comedy, the series was named as one of GLAAD's "Top Trans Stories to Watch" and director Jett Garrison and actors Shaan Dasani and Vico Ortiz were mentioned in GLAAD's "Top Trans Creatives to Watch in 2019." In *Pier Kids*, Black gay director Elegance Bratton (My House on

Viceland) returns to the Christopher Street Pier, which he first encountered as a homeless youth in New York City, to shine a light on a community often forgotten – the many queer and trans youth of color who are homeless. Featuring Krystal, a Black Trans sex worker, Casper, a young Black man struggling with his sexuality, Desean, who is stuck between a rock and a hard place, and countless other unidentified subjects, *PIER KIDS* also provides hard-hitting commentary on the complicated white-washed legacy of the Stonewall Riots.

Reeling will present Chicago-based producer and writer Thomas Awrey's dramatic feature **Drawn Back Home**, a love story between two long lost friends, Eric (Mickey O' Sullivan from *The Chi*) and Drew (Paul Michael Thomson), who reunite when Drew returns to the Midwestern hometown where they both grew up and where Eric still lives. Also from Chicago, Jose Luis Benavides' **Lulu En El Jardin** is an experimental documentary that explores the filmmakers' personal narrative and the historical events surrounding his Latina lesbian mother's institutionalization in a mental hospital.

Other American-made features in the festival include **Dramarama**, director Jonathan Wysocki's love letter to late-bloomers and drama fanatics as he tells the story of a group of high school theatre students who throw a murder mystery slumber party on the last day of summer before they all leave for college. In Brandon Krajewski's **Stone | Fruit**, a gay couple (played by Matt Palazzolo and Rob Warner) decide to come to terms with their impending divorce by taking a final trip together wine-tasting through California's vineyards. In **Cicada**, lead actors Matthew Fifer and



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Sheldon D. Brown (also director and writer, respectively) drew inspiration from their own lived experiences to tell the story of a bisexual man who, after a string of awkward encounters with women, decides to return to the world of dating men and quickly enters an intense relationship. Paul Riccio's debut feature **Give or Take** stars Jamie Effros (also the co-writer) as Martin, a disillusioned New Yorker who returns home to Cape Cod after his father's death and butts heads with his father's much younger partner, Kenneth, played by Robert Leo Butz (Bloodline). In Jon Garcia's heart-wrenching drama **Luz**, cellmates Ruben (Ernesto Reyes) and Carlos (Jesse Tayeh) become lovers in prison only to be separated when one of them is released, testing whether their love for each other can survive on the outside.

Lesbian-themed U.S. films include Olivia Peace's debut feature, **Tahara**, starring newcomers Madeline Grey DeFreece and Rachel Sennott in a queer coming-of-age story about a group of Jewish teenage girls navigating the confusing worlds of social status and sexuality as they come together for the funeral of their former Hebrew school classmate. Writer and director Suzanne Gaucci's **T11 Incomplete** explores themes of trust, betrayal and forgiveness as a complicated relationship forms between a visiting home healthcare aide, who is a recovering alcoholic, and a young paraplegic patient who was injured in a car accident. And the nostalgic documentary **The Whistle**, directed by StormMiguel Florez, recounts how whistling became the



**T11 Incomplete**

secret code for lesbians to identify one another in 1970s and '80s Albuquerque.

#### FOREIGN FEATURES

Foreign features outnumber domestic films in Reeling this year and include works from Argentina, Bolivia, Chile, France, Germany, Iran, the Netherlands, Sweden, Taiwan, Vietnam and the U.K.

**Emma**, the latest film by acclaimed Chilean director Pablo Larraín (Jackie, Neruda), stars Mariana di Girolamo (Nothing Has Occurred Here) as a woman whose wild and untamable grief from an unexpected family crisis is unleashed when she goes on a journey of personal liberation, accompanied by neon lights, reggaetón street dancers and sex parties. Gael García Bernal (The Motorcycle Diaries; Y Tu Mamá También) also stars. Also from Chile, Omar Zúñiga Hidalgo's first feature film, **The Strong Ones (Los Fuertes)**, follows gay architecture student, Lucas

(Samuel Gozález), who travels to a remote town in southern Chile to visit his sister. There, by the seaside, he meets Antonio (Antonio Altamirano), a boatswain who owns a local fishing boat. The two embark on a passionate love affair that faces increasing hostility from the inhabitants of the town forcing them to grow into their strength, independence and adulthood.

Winner of the Dutch Golden Film award and starring well-known Dutch actors Lies Visschedijk and Waldemar Torenstra, veteran director Frank Krom's **Single Street (Singel 39)** is a touching and witty drama about mixed signals and altered expectations. Career-driven Monique, a cardiac surgeon at the top of her field with little time for personal relationships, finally lets loose when she rents studio space to handsome sexy artist Max – who turns out to be gay. Though sex may not be in the cards, something else is, in this delightful story that promotes accepting love and joy wherever you can find it. Also from the Netherlands, **Galore** follows the transformation of Sander den Bass, aka Lady Galore, a popular drag queen in Europe whose “big girl” status has helped her stand out from the other performers, but poses health problems that she must face or suffer the consequences.

Family drama features prominently in two films from Argentina. Mateo Bendesky's quirky **Family Members (Los Miembros de la Familia)** follows two argumentative siblings Lucas (Tomas Wicz) and Gilda (Laila Maltz), who travel back to their childhood home on the Argentinian coast to dispose of their mother's remains, only to find themselves stuck there together when a bus strike prevents their departure. While Lucas starts a relationship with a local, Guido (Alejandro Russek), Gilda, fresh out of



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rehab, struggles with her own issues. Another homecoming takes place in director Nicolás Tete's charmingly boisterous family drama **A Skeleton in the Closet** (*Todos tenemos un muerto en el placard o un hijo en el closet*). When newly-out to his family Manuel (Facundo Gambandé) returns to Argentina, ostensibly to celebrate his parent's wedding anniversary, his real motive is to ask for money to move to Denmark with his boyfriend. But when he gets dumped long-distance, Manuel's plans are scrapped, and the trip becomes an unplanned opportunity to reconnect with the family he thought he'd finally be able to leave behind.

Vietnamese director Trinh Dinh Le Minh's debut feature film **Goodbye Mother** (*Thưa mẹ con đi*) continues the family homecoming theme with equal parts coming out story and family dramedy. Nâu Vân (Lãnh Thanh) invites his Vietnamese-American partner Ian (Võ Diên Gia Huy) to his hometown in the Vietnamese countryside during the anniversary of his father's death to introduce his lover and come out to his family. What follows is a funny and tender exploration of queerness in relation to cultural tradition and patriarchy.

In the deeply moving Bolivian film **Miss You** (*Tu me manques*), directed by Rodrigo Bellott, the suicide of Gabriel, a closeted gay Bolivian man living in New York, leads his father Jorge to travel to New York City to find out why. There, he meets his son's boyfriend Sebastian, who introduces him to Gabriel's friends and leads him on the difficult journey to discover who



**Goodbye Mother**

his son really was and why he might be gone.

Iranian Filmmaker Arash Es'haghi's documentary **Gracefully** tells the story of an 80-year-old father and cow farmer whose love of traditional Iranian dancing, which he performs in handwoven women's costumes, has had to be expressed secretly since the 1979 Islamic Revolution. Iranian Kurdish filmmaker Diako Yazdani, now living as a political refugee in Paris, returns to where he grew up in Iraqi Kurdistan to help 23-year-old Kojin come out to his religious and conservative family living in a society that insists homosexuality doesn't even exist in **The Many Lives of Kojin** (*Toutes les vies de Kojin*).

The German film **No Hard Feelings** (*Futur Drei*), directed by Faraz Shariat, winner of the Teddy Award for the best LGBTQ feature film at the 2020 Berlin Film Festival, follows Parvis (Benjamin Radjaipour), a young gay Iranian man

living in Germany, who is sentenced to community service at a refugee detention center after a minor infraction. There he meets siblings Banafshe (Banafshe Hourmazdi) and Amon (Eidin Jalali), and the fragile attraction between Parvis and Amon grows into an intense forbidden first love in the height of a youthful summer. Youthful summer love is also explored in German director Leonie Krippendorff's **Cocoon** (*Kokon*), which follows the blissful romance between two adolescent girls that plunges into out-of-depth feelings in the sweltering heat of the Berlin summertime.

From Taiwan, Sophia Yan's **Taiwan Equals Love** celebrates the one-year anniversary of same-sex marriage in Taiwan, the first Asian country to legalize it, through an intimate look at the lives of three partners of different generations, and makes the argument that the fight for equal rights is not over, even with this landmark achievement.

The program line-up would not be complete without a healthy dose of romantic relationship drama, which is the focus of David Färdmar's Swedish **Are We Lost Forever**, in which Hampus and Adrian's on-again off-again relationship gets the final nail in the coffin one morning when Hampus finally works up the nerve to reveal his love for Adrian has fizzled out for good – but has it?

#### **SHORTS PROGRAMS**

In addition to 30 feature films, Reeling presents eight curated shorts programs. From the dawn of a new relationship to the demise of the world itself, the themes and stories in Reeling's shorts program are wide-ranging and diverse.

Chicago-based work is included in five of the festival's shorts programs, totaling 12 films ranging in genre from horror to drama to comedy to experimental. Shorts by



**A Skeleton in the Closet**



local artists include: Tyle Aaron (**Home**), Aleksei Borovikov (**Glances and One More Please**), Madigan Burke (**Last Supper Zoom**), Joe Garstki (**They**), Erik Gernand (**Sundown**), Richard Knight, Jr. (**Blame in on Toby**), Frédéric Moffett (**Horsey**), Oriana Oppice (**Go Go, Boy!**), Dan Pedersen (**Limerence**), Lydia Smyth (**Forever**) and Alexander Zorn (**Bird of Paradise**).

Shorts program **End of the World as you know It** takes us on an emotional journey through life's most uncertain and unexpected times, from diagnoses to disasters to the apocalypse, and includes five films from Brazil, Spain, Puerto Rico, Greece and the U.S.

There's "something off" about the creepy characters in the dark tales of temptation, obsession and madness screening in **Something Wicked This Way Comes**, which includes three U.S. shorts.



**Are We Lost Forever**

**Come as you Are** provides comedic relief with nine U.S. comedy and dramedy shorts.

**Recuerdame (REMEMBER ME)** offers an intimate glimpse into the hearts and homes of Latinxs reconnecting with friends, rekindling old flames, and trying to mend fractured families, with five films from the U.S., Mexico and Puerto Rico.

In **In Your Own Time** love transcends age and time in these heartwarming and sometimes poignant stories of unlikely bonds, surprising friendships and missed opportunities, which includes six films from the U.S.

and U.K.

In **Who Do You Trust?**, which includes six films from Switzerland, Iceland, Germany and the U.S., young women grapple with questions of who you can trust with your heart, your secrets and your flesh!

**Enduring Love** is pursued by the men in this shorts program of six films from India, Canada, Italy, the U.K., and the U.S.

In **Lonely Beautiful Boys** young gay men are looking to make a connection in nine shorts from Canada, France, India, Sweden and the U.S.

Shorts being shown with shorter features include: **Horsey**

(Frédéric Moffet) and **The Cruising Monologues** (Jose Batista-Ayala), showing with **Lulu En El Jardin**; **Naomi Replansky at 100** (Megan Rossman), screening with **Keyboard Fantasies**; 10/01 **Queer Nights** (Michalina Mrozek), screening with **Gracefully**; and **Caro Comes Out** (Brit Fryer and Caro Hernandez), showing with **The Whistle**.

For more information, call (773) 293-1447, consult the festival website at <https://reelingfilmfestival.org/2020/>, or follow ReelingFilmFest on Twitter, [reeling.filmfest](https://twitter.com/reeling.filmfest) on Facebook and @reelingfilmfest on Instagram for the latest Reeling news and ticket promotions.



**Who Do You Trust?**



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5	Jonas Blue x Paloma Faith	Mistakes
6	Melanie C	In Out Of Love (Radio Edit)
7	Kylie Minogue	Say Something (Radio Mix)
8	DASCO ft Twan Ray & EV Palmer	Magik
9	The Shapeshifters	Finally Ready ft. Billy Porter
10	Yves V	Home Now (feat. Alida)
11	Aviella & Sawyr	Lean
12	TCTS ft. Glowie	Better Without You (Radio Mix)
13	Panteros666	I See Your Rainbow
14	Loud Luxury	Aftertaste ft. Morgan St. Jean
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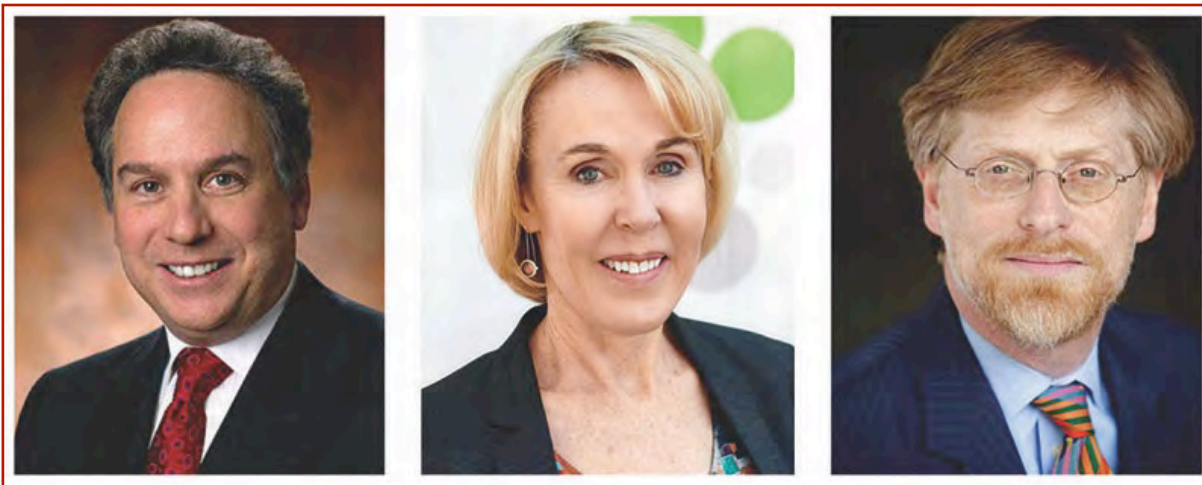
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# POSITIVE THOUGHTS



## Partnership Science

### HIV advocates discuss how lessons from pandemic vaccine development can help fight COVID-19

By Oriol R. Gutierrez Jr.

Mark Feinberg and Helen Rees joined Mitchell Warren for a webinar titled “Pandemic Vaccine Development and Lessons for COVID-19” in April 2020. It is part of the COVID-19 and HIV webinar series hosted by AVAC, which focuses on global advocacy for HIV prevention.

Feinberg is president and CEO of the International AIDS Vaccine Initiative. Rees is executive director of the Wits Reproductive Health and HIV Institute at the University of the Witwatersrand in Johannesburg. Warren is executive director of AVAC. Feinberg holds an MD and a PhD. Rees has a medical degree and a master's in social and political sciences. Warren has degrees in English and history and studied health policy.

Below is an edited transcript of the webinar. Go to <http://www.avac.org/covid> for the full transcript and related resources.

**Mitchell Warren: Mark, what might we expect for coronavirus vaccine development?**

**Mark Feinberg:** There are many questions. How do we ensure that SARS-CoV-2 [the name of the new coronavirus that causes COVID-19] doesn't become an endemic infection that plagues humanity for many years? HIV is the most vivid example.

What role can a vaccine play in controlling and potentially eradicating the COVID-19 pandemic? What are the prospects for developing a safe and efficacious vaccine? When can we expect that one or more of them will be available?

To that end, how are different partners working together to accelerate vaccine development? What are the

opportunities for that process to be even more effective? What more needs to be done to be successful in accelerating vaccine development efforts as quickly as possible?

In many ways, we are in a better position because of all of the innovation and investment that have gone into HIV vaccine development. The tools and insights are now being directly applied.

HIV put equitable global access front and center in the discussions of any development of any biomedical innovation. We need to think about how to expedite an efficacious vaccine, and we need to make sure that it's available to everyone who needs it.

Many people are hearing that a vaccine will be available in 12 to 18 months. Does that mean that we'll have efficacy data on one or more vaccine candidates? Or that adequate global supply of an efficacious vaccine will be available?

This is important since, unlike Ebola, where you may need a few hundred thousand doses, we may need billions of doses of a SARS-CoV-2 vaccine.

We're focusing on how fast the initial candidates, including RNA vaccines, have gone from recognition of the pathogen to entering the clinic, including these novel nucleic acid technologies. But is the most important criterion being fastest to the clinic or to global access?

It's better to be proactive than reactive. This is what stimulated the formation of the Coalition for Epidemic Preparedness Innovations (CEPI). Helen Rees is currently the chair of the CEPI Scientific Advisory Board. That is a role that I previously held.

**MW: Helen, please tell us about CEPI as well as vaccine and treatment research.**

**Helen Rees:** CEPI was established after the Ebola outbreak in West Africa. The aim was to accelerate the development of vaccines against emerging infectious diseases, but also to enable equitable access to these vaccines.

Broadly, the focus is on preparedness in thinking about what the priority pathogens are; starting to invest money in those candidates; accelerating research so that in the event of an outbreak you can move extremely quickly; and sustainability, looking for durable solutions.

CEPI is supporting the development of eight SARS-CoV-2 vaccines. They're at different stages, but we didn't start anything that was too far away from getting into clinics. We looked at things that we could rapidly adapt for COVID-19.

Other parties are also supporting vaccines. There are numerous candidate vaccines worldwide. The first clinical trials in humans have started, so we're all pushing as fast as can be. Most of those candidates are not going to pass even the first post. If we can get two or three viable vaccines, then I think we would all be thrilled.

Not only do we have to look at what the vaccine is when choosing these candidates, but we also have to ask: How easy is this vaccine to manufacture? Are there manufacturing sites that are going to be easy to convert? How quick is it going to be to produce the doses that we're going to need? Who's going to invest that money now with no guarantees?

In many countries, not only is there a second wave of COVID-19, but we



anticipate that in many places this might become endemic or even seasonal. This is going to be a nasty virus that we're going to have to deal with for years to come.

What other things do we need? Clearly and urgently, we need effective therapy. We have therapies that alleviate symptoms, such as paracetamol for mild symptoms and oxygen for respiratory distress. But at the moment, we have few therapies that have been shown definitively to change the course of the disease.

And, just like HIV, we also want to find drug interventions for treatment and prevention while we're looking for a vaccine to protect at-risk populations.

For example, people are extremely worried about health workers. If we cannot keep them at work, the outcome for patients is going to be much worse. There are big studies exploring whether it's possible with existing drugs to either prevent infection or change the course of disease and prevent deaths.

**MW: Mark, what about partnerships?**

**MF:** There's a science of innovation, which drives vaccine development. There's also a science of partnerships, which requires thoughtfulness and new strategies. We need to get better at that.

I hope that we'll be good enough to respond quickly to COVID-19. I know that this pandemic will force us to become increasingly good at it for the future.

**MW: Helen, in a pandemic, how does community engagement happen?**

**HR:** The lessons from HIV are extraordinary. Community is one of them. Avoiding stigma is another. Communication is yet another. An important part of that is sharing accurate information.

**MW: Any last thoughts?**

**HR:** If ever there has been something that has humbled us all, this particular pandemic is it. It respects nobody. This is therefore a leveler.

We speak so much about universal health coverage and sustainable development goals and equity. We're going to have to really look at all that. We must watch this issue around access.

If people close borders and say, "Mine first and mine second and mine last," and we don't mind about what happens elsewhere, then the world has lost an opportunity to do things fundamentally different in terms of global health.

**MF:** We all know that our efforts in HIV have been disrupted by the COVID-19 pandemic. That means that there is lost time and lost opportunity. Unfortunately, people are going to suffer as a result. Timelines are going to be delayed.

We need to figure out how to maintain the priority of the HIV response throughout the COVID-19 pandemic. Being an optimist, I hope that what we learn from the COVID-19 response may also be helpful in the future of the HIV response, just like the HIV response put us in a much better place to address COVID-19.

**MW: What I hear loud and clear is, it's about global health, not about any one disease over another. To move all of this work forward, let's give new meaning to the science and the art of partnership.**

*Oriol R. Gutierrez Jr. is the editor-in-chief of POZ magazine. Find him on Twitter @oriolgutierrez. This column is a project of Plus, Positively Aware, POZ, The Body and Q Syndicate, the LGBT wire service. Visit their websites — <http://hivplusmag.com>, <http://positivelyaware.com>, <http://poz.com> and <http://thebody.com> — for the latest updates on HIV/AIDS.*

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# GRAB ROGER

## Clients That Lawyers Watch Out For

By Roger V. McCaffrey-Boss, Esq.

**Q: I called a lawyer that advertises in the local LGBT papers. She told me that she wouldn't represent me. Does a lawyer have the right to turn down a client?**

**A:** Sometimes it is appropriate for a lawyer to not take a new client or handle their legal problems, for a variety of reasons:

- A case outside a lawyer's expertise. At the initial client interview, if I ask myself, "why is this client talking to me?" the matter is probably outside my expertise. It is important that all lawyers know the limits of their competence and refer matters to a specialist in appropriate cases.

- A case with an actual or potential conflict of interest. The law books are full of cases where lawyers were liable for representing the buyer and seller in a closing, the borrower and lender in a financing, or an investor and the investment promoter. These situations often arise when two amicable parties,

with divergent interests, ask the lawyer to spare them the cost of a second lawyer. When they later have a falling out, the one who lost money will sue the lawyer for malpractice.

- Clients who have had previous lawyers. This is a human red flag. The tip-off is a prospective client who tells the lawyer, "another law firm told me that..." The lawyer will inevitably be compared to a hazy, but ever-improving recollection of contrary advice by a different firm. These clients will abruptly depart when things don't go their way. Unfortunately, lawyers do not make the facts.

- The client who cannot define objectives that the legal system can achieve. This client will not accept that court orders and judgments may be difficult to enforce, and may be impossible to satisfy. This client wants the opponent broke and in prison. The client wants to get even. They may

have psychological needs they are unwilling to reveal, or be one of those legal "buffs" who is more interested in the process than the result.

- The make-or-break case. Clients depending on their lawyers to rescue them from grave financial difficulties or hardship have no tolerance for the lawyer failing to succeed. Even if the lawyer takes the case, the lawyer is in a no-win situation because even if the lawyer gets a good result, it won't be enough to satisfy the client.



- Perpetual victims. These clients can't understand why people are always taking unfair advantage of them. A tip-off is a person who complains that his or her own family and friends have turned against him or her for no reason. Perpetual victims live in a world of dishonesty, including supposed wrongdoing by previous lawyers. And if the new lawyer doesn't resolve the case to their complete satisfaction, then they must have sold out to the opposition.

- Packrats and collectors. This client arrives with disorganized boxes of files, receipts and records that the lawyer is expected to sort out. The collection includes wads of irrelevant papers. Whenever asked for a specific document, the client assures the lawyer that it's in one of the boxes. If the lawyer is foolish enough to take the case and search the boxes, the lawyer won't find the needed item. At this point, the client will insist that the document that was going to win the case was definitely in the box when given to the lawyer.

- The client who has trouble telling the truth. Topping the list of clients to avoid are those who lie or are dishonest with their lawyers. One can count on them to get the lawyer into a jam and reconstruct the facts so that the lawyer takes the blame. Unless a lawyer is a criminal defense expert representing someone who has been indicted, stay clear of dishonest clients.

*Roger McCaffrey-Boss is a graduate of Hamline University School of Law, St. Paul, Minnesota, and is a member of the Chicago Bar Association. You can email him at [RVMLawyer@aol.com](mailto:RVMLawyer@aol.com). He suggests that you consult your own lawyer for any specific questions regarding the issues raised in this column.*

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# GRAB HOLLY

## Into the Money Pit

By Holly Maholm

There is a saying among current and former homeowners that, "A house is a hole in the ground into which you throw money." Notice there are no words which foresee any limit to the amount of money to be so sacrificed, nor any words promising leisure, comfort or repose as a result of the effort. No.

We might well suppose that this saying – in its original, unedited form – read, "A house is a hole in the ground in which a fire is raging, and you, the homeowner, for the sake of what little warmth keeps you alive, must feed that conflagration with all the money you possess...and all you can borrow." But for those of us who have been homeowners, we just use the simple phrase "money pit."

A few days after I and my friends at Donut Time had inspected the house at No. 9, Wellington Square, I conducted an informal survey to see if there was a consensus on taking the house... or continuing to look. I was surprised to find there was unanimous accord with Grandma Lily's opinion that we are just the folks who belong in a place like No.

9. Accordingly, I sat down with Gary, at the bank, to see what sort of deal I could negotiate. We had many new expenses for Donut Time's home delivery business, so my budget was already under considerable stress.

Fortunately, my negotiation with Gary was easier than expected. He looked at me across his desk and pleaded, "How about if I just give you the house? Or, maybe for One Dollar, cause we have to have some sort of purchase price?" I must have looked shocked and surprised, because he continued. "No one will take it as it is, with all the repairs it needs, not to mention its history as a crack house and crematorium. If you don't take it, the bank will have to pay to have it demolished, and that will cost more than what the land is worth."

I sat silently, trying to take in what he had said, which Gary apparently misread as a clever negotiating ploy on my part designed to extract even more concessions. "Okay, I get it," he continued, with evident exasperation. "You've got a lot of work to do on the house to make it livable, and you need money. So the bank will give you a line of credit – no limit – secured by a mortgage on the house. I trust you to fix it up right, and not waste the money. But... that's my final offer. Take it or leave it."

A lawyer more bountifully endowed with self-regard than I might have chalked up this success to my skills as a negotiator, but even I could see I had merely stumbled into this moment of Gary's extreme desperation. Nevertheless, I had the presence of mind to request one further concession, which Gary had not been expecting, but which he reluctantly agreed. I obtained an option to buy the empty lot adjoining No. 9, should we have need for it in the future.

Our deal being agreed, I ran off to share the happy news with my friends, and to line up the help I would need to commence what would unquestionably be a challenging remodeling project. I told Xandra of my



success, but her only reply was, "That's nice, but I've got all the work I can handle right here in the kitchen; and the same goes for Grandma Lily." As for Cindy, her reply was similar, "I've got enough to do already, but let me know when you start drawing up the plans; I want to choose my bedroom."

I had anticipated these replies and was not discouraged. Rather, I was counting on the Outlaws – Recon, Fender and Tuco – to carry most of the load of the remodeling work. Accordingly, I asked them to meet me at No. 9, so we could formulate our plans. When I arrived, I was surprised to see that Aly was with them.

We took seats on the front porch, but – before I could begin – Recon spoke up. "It's OK, Holly, we already heard we got the house. That's great; we're excited. But here's the thing. We've been doing a lot of thinking and talking about your plans for this house. We know you're planning bedrooms and bathrooms on the second and third floors; then the whole first floor divided up into a TV room, a game room, and so on. Anyway...we wanted you to know what we've decided.

"This is not easy," Recon announced, with great reluctance, "but...although we appreciate what you're trying to do for us, the fact is, we've drawn up our own plans for the house – which are different from yours." When he said this, my heart sank.

*(To be continued)*

Holly Maholm is a transgender woman living in Cleveland, Ohio. Look for Volume 2 of *What Would a Unicorn Do?* (now available on Amazon) which contains additional episodes of Holly's on-going story of her life among the unicorns, plus additional articles and a short story of a transgender woman confronted by Satan! Send a message to Holly [www.hollymaholm.com](http://www.hollymaholm.com).

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# GRAB A PLANE



## Seattle, Washington City of Hills with Stunning Views All Around

By Bill Malcolm

It is the best of times. It is the worst of times. That is life traveling during the pandemic. I snagged a free ticket from Indianapolis to Seattle for just 6,000 points and bought a one way back nonstop on Alaska Airlines for just \$97. My apartment hotel room at the Baroness Hotel on First Hill was just \$89 a night. All of these are unheard of prices. The weather was perfect-highs in the 70s and 80s and sunny every day for a week. Seattle is actually in a rain shadow of the Olympic Mountains.

### WHAT TO DO

Get a CityPass and enjoy all the museums and attractions with one ticket. It's very convenient and you save time and money. Do not miss the Museum of Flight at Boeing Field. Seattle (home of Boeing) has a rich aircraft history all on display at this museum, which chronicles aircraft from the Amelia Earhart Days to today. It is found on five buildings on a 25-acre campus, which features over 160 airplanes and spacecraft. You can also see Air Force One, the Concorde, the first 747 and NASA's space shuttle trainer. Take

the #124 bus to get there. More information at [www.museumofflight.org](http://www.museumofflight.org).

The views from the Space Needle at Seattle Center north of downtown are amazing as is the Chihuly Garden and Glass Museum next door.

Head up to Capitol Hill (home of the Capitol Hill Occupied Zone and for years ground zero for the gayborhood) and onto nearby Volunteer Park which features the Asian American Museum and great view of the Olympic Mountains. Capitol Hill even has its own light rail station now.

Then walk down the trails at Interlaken Park and over the Montlake Bridge to the beautiful UW campus. You can also take the light rail to the UW as well. Take in some rays a Madison Park Beach on Lake Washington. Look north for the LGBTQ section at the northern corner of the beach. More views of Mt. Rainier and the Cascade Mountains. In addition, Seattle is a boater's paradise.

The Woodland Park Zoo (5500 Phinney Avenue North) has great animals on display as well as native northwest evergreen vegetation.

The trees grow to the sky in the Northwest and they are all evergreens.

Deciduous trees cannot take the summer drought so enjoy the Western Hemlocks, Douglas Firs, and Western Hemlock. They do not call it the Evergreen State for nothing.

Do not miss the Aquarium (Pier 59) along the waterfront to learn about the marine life of the Puget Sound, the Strait of Juan de Fuca, and the Pacific Ocean. Discover playful sea otters, octopuses, moon jellies, Tufted Puffins, sea urchins, harbor seals, and more.

Take the Washington State ferry to Bainbridge Island (35 minutes each way) for just \$9 round trip. Great views of the island and downtown Seattle. The views of Mt. Baker and Mt. Rainier from the ferry are amazing.

Rent a bike from Pedal Anywhere (611 Eastlake Avenue, <http://www.pedalanywhere.com>) and ride around Lake Union to Gas Works Park on the Burke Gilman trail for great views of downtown and then over the floating bridge across Lake Washington on the new bike trail to the east side Nightlife.

As mentioned previously, the gayborhood may be found on Capitol Hill. Enjoy a burger or taco and libations on the patio at Cuff Complex (13th and





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Pine). It is a Seattle favorite. Then have a drink at the Madison Pub (1315 E Madison). The bear friendly Diesel is another option. (14th Avenue). All are close to each other. My favorite bar, Pony, is still closed, unfortunately. Everything is socially distanced and you must remain seated in the bar (and be served by the waiter).

#### **WHERE TO EAT**

Schmaltzy's Deli has great deli food. Try the OG latke press sandwich. The potato pancake is served with pastrami and choice of two sides. You will find them in the Ballard neighborhood ( N. Leary Way). There is

great seafood, Vietnamese (Pho), and Thai places everywhere. It is hard to find a bad restaurant. I liked the Pho restaurant in the U District.

#### **GETTING AROUND**

The Link Light Rail takes you from the airport to downtown. Get off at the University Station and walk to the Baroness Hotel on First Hill (1001 Spring Street at Boren.) Buy an Orca Pass, which is good on all transit systems. You will not need nor want a car. King County Metro (the bus system) goes everywhere or you can often walk although the hills are steep.

#### **GETTING TO SEATTLE**

As noted above, this town is an Alaska Airlines hub. Southwest is another great choice and Delta has a new hub here as well. All 3 are keeping the middle seats open for now. Wear your mask and bring your sanitizer. I had a row to myself on most flights. Service is kept to a minimum so as to avoid flight attendants having contact with passengers. You will want to bring your own food and beverage plus lots of hand sanitizer, a mask, and Handi-Wipes.

#### **WHERE TO STAY**

I stayed at the Baroness Hotel on First Hill (1005 Spring Street at Boren). You get your own apartment. The art deco building is a landmark and the windows open.

There is a Whole Foods







nearby (1110 Broadway at Madison) as well as a Bartell Drugs if you need anything. There are also several restaurants on nearby Madison Avenue including Stella Restaurant at the historic Sorrento Hotel across the street.

In addition to the Baroness Apartment Hotel, I like the Inn at Virginia Mason across the street. The Springhill Suites on Yale Avenue is another value favorite (rooms from \$73) as is the Moore Hotel near Pike Place Market. All the hotel rates are very reasonable right now as the cruises are all cancelled and there are no conventions.

#### **COVID UPDATES**

Many restaurants are al fresco now. The museums have re-opened with capacity restrictions. Most require advance registration on their app, as does the Space Needle, to limit crowds. The Space Needle even sprays you with

an infrared type disinfectant as you spin around 20 seconds on a circle. All museums and attractions have one-way walkways. Seattleites wear the mask indoors and out so keep it on at all times.

#### **OTHER FUN FACTS**

The growth in Seattle has finally slowed but it is still the nation's hottest housing market. This is an innovative city – Costco, REI, Starbucks, Nordstrom and of course, Amazon were all started here.

There is water everywhere-Puget sound on the west side, Lake Washington on the east. Mountains are all around you as well: 14,000-foot Mt. Rainier to the south, Mt. Baker to the north, the Cascade Mountains to the east, and the Olympic Mountains frame the Western sky. A great unique area gets less rain than most cities and is so

warm that you can grow palm trees here (although tomatoes struggle).

#### **FOR MORE INFORMATION**

Read the Seattle Gay News (<http://www.sgn.org>) or the queer section of The Stranger (Seattle's alternative weekly newspaper). Visit Seattle has a lot of ideas as well. You won't run out of things to do in this great Northwest city.

*Bill Malcolm is a former Seattle resident and frequent visitor. He has a master's degree from the University of Washington. His syndicated LGBTQ value travel column has or does appear in publications around the country. Special thanks to Visit Seattle, the Museum of Flight, and the Baroness Hotel for their hospitality and travel suggestions.*



## Lambda Legal Blasts Trump's SCOTUS Shortlist Filled with Anti-LGBT and Extremist Judges



Just weeks ahead of the presidential election, President Donald Trump released a new shortlist of potential Supreme Court nominees that is teeming with anti-LGBT extremists and dangerous ideologues. **Sharon McGowan**, Legal Director and Chief Strategy Officer at Lambda Legal released the following statement:

"Today, the Trump Administration released a new list of dangerous, ultra-conservative ideologues as potential nominees for the highest court in the land. This list is teeming with individuals who have alarming anti-LGBTQ and anti-civil rights records, which should be disqualifying for any judicial nominee, let alone a nominee for the Supreme Court.

Notably, the President's "litmus test" for SCOTUS nominees seems to have demanded zealous opposition to abortion and common sense gun control measures, as well as an unrelenting commitment to destroying the Affordable Care Act and a deep hostility to LGBTQ equality. All of these positions are far outside of the mainstream, and threaten not only the legal rights but also the health and safety of LGBTQ people, everyone living with HIV, and other groups who rely on fair and impartial courts to vindicate their rights.

This troubling list includes some of the most anti-LGBTQ activists sitting on the bench today, including Fifth Circuit Court of Appeals Judges Kyle Duncan and James Ho, as well as Ninth Circuit Court of Appeals Judge Lawrence Van Dyke, who was deemed "not qualified" by the American Bar Association due to specific concerns about his ability to treat LGBTQ litigants fairly. Other nominees include elected officials, judges and attorneys whose

careers have been marked by a hostility to civil rights, particularly those of the LGBTQ community. In sum, the number of nominees on this list whose records are replete with anti-LGBTQ bias is both staggering and terrifying.

President Trump's unveiling of a list of extremists and ideologues as potential Supreme Court nominees should worry all who believe in the importance of a fair-minded judiciary. The impact that another anti-LGBTQ nominee could have on the Supreme Court would be catastrophic. For over three years, this administration has pulled out all of the stops in its attempt to weaponize our federal courts in service of a dangerous right-wing agenda and at the expense of true justice and equal rights for all. It is up to us to speak out against this assault on our system of justice, and be active participants rather than mere spectators in our democracy. We cannot count on the courts to protect us if we do not protect our courts."

## Victory Fund Condemns Homophobic Attacks on Jon Hoadley; Demands U.S. Rep. Fred Upton and the NRCC Apologize



LGBTQ Victory Fund, the only national organization dedicated to electing LGBTQ leaders to public office, condemned a homophobic attack campaign by U.S. Rep. **Fred Upton** and the National Republican Congressional Committee (NRCC) that targets Michigan state Rep. **Jon Hoadley**, who is running against Rep. Upton for U.S. Congress. Victory Fund is demanding an immediate end to the homophobic attacks and for Rep. Upton and the NRCC to apologize for perpetuating harmful homophobic stereotypes. The NRCC is a political committee of the Republican Party tasked with helping to elect Republican members of the U.S. House and Upton is one of their most vulnerable incumbents. For weeks, the NRCC has repeatedly referred to Hoadley as a "pedo sex poet" – a startling and defamatory use of homophobic tropes about gay men as

pedophiles and sexual deviants. It also successfully pitched a political hit piece to the New York Post that purposely took phrases out of context from a 15-year-old live journal Hoadley wrote while an undergraduate student. They then use those phrases to make outrageous claims about Hoadley – all of them aimed at perpetuating homophobic stereotypes about gay men. Campaign mailers sent to voters' homes use the same phrases to attack Hoadley.

"Fred Upton is resorting to digging up Jon's puerile college blog posts and pulling together out-of-context words and phrases because he can find nothing else to criticize about Jon's public service record," said **Annise Parker**, President & CEO of LGBTQ Victory Fund. "If Upton wants to be a digital avenger working to critique 15-year-old internet postings, why does he remain silent on the racist, sexist, transphobic and anti-immigrant tweets that are a constant from this White House? Where is his rebuttal of Donald Trump's tweets denying the extent of a pandemic that has killed 180,000 Americans with no end in sight? It is pathetic to see Fred resort to becoming an internet troll at a time when our president's words and actions have led to a resurgence in hate crimes, white supremacy and divisiveness. Any media outlet that reports on Fred's take on Jon's internet musings from 15 years ago should also ask for Fred's takes on Trump's tweets from just the past week."

A reading of the live blog posts reveals the extent of the distortion and smear campaign by Upton and the NRCC – using small sections of posts to claim Hoadley mocks women, uses drugs, victimizes sexual partners and is a pedophile. Each reference is addressed and debunked below:

**Hoadley is a champion for women.** He has continuously been a champion for women's rights in the legislature, advocating for equal pay legislation, reproductive rights, childcare resources and beyond. This fixation on a bad attempt at humor when he was just 21 – for which he has also issued an apology – aims to paint him as a sexist and to distract from the actual issues – including women's issues – at hand in this election.

**Outdated pedophilia tropes against an LGBTQ candidate.** In a clearly satirical discussion about whether all 'gay men desire to be flower girls' an aforementioned friend jokes that he has no desire to see a 'four-year-old wearing a thong' as a condemnation of the hypersexualization of children. The phrase has been removed from context to somehow imply that Jon is a pedophile, an accusation that has been repeated multiple times in many ways by the NRCC and its staff.

**Implied drug usage.** The original passage details that Hoadley went to leather bar to "learn about crystal meth" and attended an informational meeting about the drug's impact on the LGBTQ+ community. He ended the post by writing, "Don't do meth."





Photos By Anthony Meade

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## YOUNG CULTURE Announces Debut Full-Length *Young Culture* Out 10/16



Pop rock band **Young Culture** has announced details of their highly anticipated debut full-length record. The self-titled album is set to be released on October 16th via Equal Vision Records. The band has also shared new single "*Better Off As Friends*," which follows previously released "*I'll Be There*" and "*Holiday In Vegas*."

Vocalist **Alexander Magnan** shares:

"We're so stoked to share something fun and new with all of you as well as announce our first album. We hope you have as much fun watching it as we did making it."

Young Culture, the group's debut LP, encompasses the struggles of trying to find your way in your early 20s. With familiar themes of young love, the highs and lows of friendship and struggles with mental health, Young Culture has created not only a highly relatable album, but a lively group of songs to jump around and sing along to.

This dynamic self-titled release takes influence from hip-hop, country, hardcore, and alternative rock genres, all of which seamlessly blend the diverse backgrounds and styles of each member of the group. Coproduced by Sam Guiana and Anton DeLost with long nights fueled by cheap wine, Young Culture put their heart and soul into the recording of this record.

If there's one thing Young Culture wants fans to take away from this release, it's that this is Young Culture. The group delves into many different

musical genres and techniques, and they believe that this album is the best representation of them as a group. If a new listener is looking to explore the sounds of Young Culture, this will be the album to do so.

"This album represents closing the chapter of youth and opening up to new discoveries," Alex stated. "It is a recap of the past years for us as a group and individuals, and we want people to know that with this release, Young Culture is here and ready to go."

Young Culture is a collection of songs that will make you feel fulfilled in leaving your youth behind, while still reminding you that growing up does not mean you have to lose your liveliness. Young Culture are three guys genuinely doing what they love - connecting to listeners through their experiences and sharing an overall love for their community.

Pre-orders for Young Culture, out October 16th via Equal Vision Records, are available now at [youngculture.lnk.to/self-titled](http://youngculture.lnk.to/self-titled).

## FAME ON FIRE SHARES DEBUT ALBUM *LEVELS*



**Fame On Fire** has shared their debut album *Levels*, out now via Hopeless Records. Spanning across 13 tracks, the album touches on themes of anguish, loss and toxicity in relationships and life alongside messages of hopefulness and redemption.

Fame On Fire is genre-defying and pushing the boundaries of rock, hip hop, and heavy music, by unapologetically being themselves. Unpretentious,

honest, and boldly brash, Fame On Fire has delivered a diverse, energetic, and emotionally-wrenching collection of songs for their debut album, *Levels*. Holding multiple meanings, *Levels*, is both about going through the motions of life, the various levels, ups and downs that all people can relate to, and about the quest to level-up and continue to progress and move forward. This dichotomy defines a band that is not willing to stand still or be complacent, but one that continuously tries to evolve their sound and craft.

Leaving absolutely nothing on the table, Fame On Fire self-produced, tracked, and mixed the album on their own, in the studio they built, laboring over every lyric, chord, beat, and riff, and painstakingly polishing every track. On "*Her Eyes*" - the band's first #1 song on Sirius XM Octane - singer **Bryan Kuznitz** explores the turmoil of surviving an emotionally abusive relationship with the brutal honesty of someone who wants to push through any challenge and remains hopeful in getting to the other side.

It is this hopefulness that ultimately prevails in an album that doesn't shy away from themes of anguish, loss, and

toxicity in relationships and life. Whether it be fighting demons and breaking out of the internal prison of the mind in "*HEADSPACE FT. POORSTACY*" or swimming consciously through a downward spiral in "*Down*," Fame On Fire paints a visceral portrait of the uneven journey of life that we all go through and that we can all get through together. Through the darkness comes a flicker of hope that shines through to a new day.

Fame On Fire is **Bryan Kuznitz** (vocals), **Blake Saul** (guitarist), **Paul Spirou** (bass), and **Alex Roman** (drums).

With *Levels*, Fame On Fire set out to show how important music is for the band and their fans. According to guitarist Blake Saul, "Our band exists because all of us grew up together and we each found our own ways to music, which is living and breathing inside of us." *Levels* proves that Fame On Fire is ready to help define a new era of rock music. Just don't call Fame On Fire a cover band.

Fans can check out and purchase *Levels* now at <http://smarturl.it/FameOnFireLevels>

## BEARINGS ANNOUNCE NEW ALBUM 'HELLO, IT'S YOU'



Bearings have announced the details of their upcoming new album '*Hello, It's You*', out November 20 through Pure Noise Records. It was produced by **Courtney Ballard** (Good Charlotte, Waterparks).

As a whole, '*Hello, It's You*' uses its lyrical poignancy to elevate universal emotions all too jumbled in the current climate. It's hard enough to be human, but add in the creeping existential dead de jour, and it's downright confounding at times. But by reassuring fans to embrace the conflict and messiness of life, *Hello, It's You* serves as a reminder of our own humanity, reaching deep into those emotions and stirring something important and long-lasting.

"Sway is a tongue in cheek track about someone who thinks they are way too damn cool," says vocalist **Doug Cousins**. "The song came about pretty quickly and once we got going with it, we knew it was going to be the first single we wanted everyone.... we wanted something everyone could move to. Something with a raw dose of energy."

While the world outside is certainly anything but sensical these days, Cousins and his bandmates have worked to mine their mixed emotions on their sophomore full-length.

'*Hello, It's You*' is now available for pre-order at <https://smarturl.it/Bearings>





# SIDETRACK

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