



OFFICIAL SELECTION
**I AM Film
Festival**
Knock Out Blonde

Forever With Pride

1st January 2024

Issue 25



KNOCK OUT BLONDE

THE KELLIE MALONEY STORY

FEATURING
ALEXANDRA BILLINGS

MUSIC BY

CHER ELTON JOHN LITTLE RICHARD MAROON 5 RUPAUL SADE



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BY ART FACTORY FILMS VERDI PRODUCTIONS

1st January 2024

Issue 25



Editors Words

Well we 're now in the year 2025 and what will be our third birthday year on the 1st June.

We've got three new e-magazine/directories come and we have just launched our very own Charity Calendar called ~ LOVE WINS ~ and with your help and support I know it will.

Dharma is not self-indulgence

Gardening with Goodfellow

LGBTQ+ Support

Cheer Up

KNOCK OUT BLONDE

Rainbow Traveller

Crystal and Queenie

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"Dharma is not self-indulgence; Dharma is not a spa!"

By

Jampa Wurst

and co-Author

Elizabeth Napp

People often think that Dharma gives rise to good feelings, breathing in and breathing out, getting your fingernails done and then your toes. An indulgence.

But no, that's not Dharma.

Dharma from its origin is for the liberation of everyone. The Buddha didn't say, "These or those are not allowed".

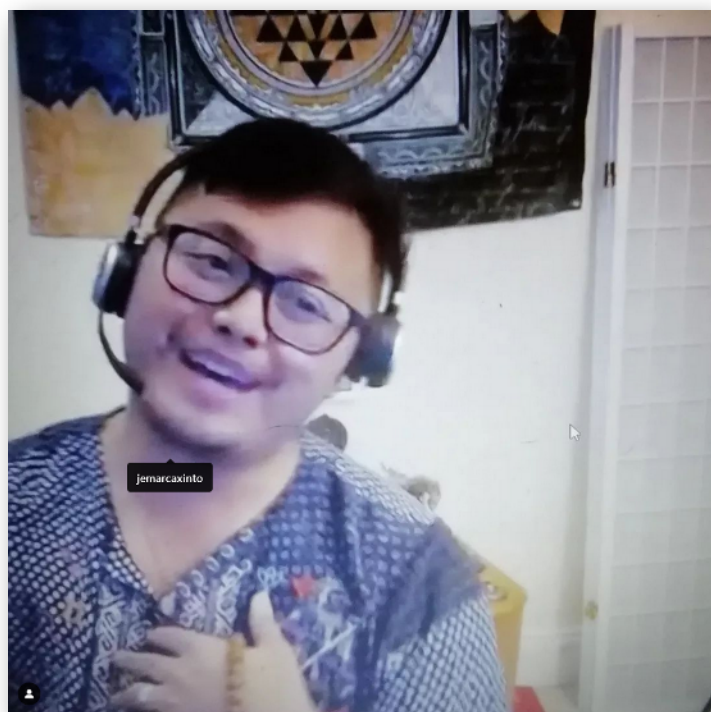
Queer people, like me, 2SLGBTQIA+ people, are often excluded in their spiritual communities all over the world. And bullying Queer people can experience in their local communities, workplaces, and families.



Therefore, I founded IQBC with their International Queer Buddhist Conferences. Since the first conference in 2021, in the pandemic, these gatherings have become an annual international event together with the monthly Conscious Connections of the IQBC, which focus on arts and meditation.

The idea of the IQBC was from the very beginning to create a safe space for everyone. There is this "need to have such gatherings where lesbians, gays, bisexuals, trans, queers, questionings, intersex, asexual, and other people supporting the community ('allies') can share their ideas, their thoughts, <https://iqbc.org> :~ About us.

The conference is not meant to be only a platform for scientific exchange, but also to be a safe space for open communication, connection, and deep learning from each other. Thus, IQBC solicits a wide range of contributions in meditation and in artsy expressions, which in addition to Zoom are provided on gather.town for each conference.



This year the 3rd IQBC took place again on Zoom and gather.town from October 27 to 29 with the title "Arts – Gender – Buddhism".

We were blessed that the famous black, gay, queer Buddhist teacher, Lama Rod Owens, agreed to be the keynote speaker. He spoke about "Real Times in change of Apocalypse" and shared news about his book, that was published on Halloween after the conference with the title "The New Saints". His talk was amazing because he activated the intersection of his identity to create a platform that was natural, engaging, and inclusive.

(s. <https://www.leadership-reimagined.org/becoming-a-new-saint>)

More than 120 people attended the conference with contributors from all over the world. The schedule over all the time zones was a challenge!

Professor Stephen Kerry (they/them) from Charles Darwin University, Australia, spoke about "Gender and Buddhism", sharing parts of interviews of their field research among Buddhist queer Australians. It was obvious, that all around the globe, queers have similar difficulties to be accepted in society and Buddhist community.

Elizabeth Napp (she, her) from New York, USA, spoke about "Misfits, Outcasts, and the Revolutionary Reality of Buddhism" and the spread of Buddhism on the Silk Roads by merchants who were often outcasts in their societies and their connections to the present-day where "outcasts often spread the most exciting possibilities for the reshaping of a more liberated society."

Kody Muncaster (they, them), PhD Candidate in Gender, Sexuality, & Women's Studies, Western University, and Instructor in Buddhism, Psychology, & Mental Health Program, University of Toronto, Canada sent a video called "Queer Approaches to Trans(forming) Buddhist Studies". The research is also part of their book, that will be published in 2024. Unhappily they couldn't attend by Zoom.



Stephanie Kolton (she, her), Founder and Executive Director of Patchwork Transgender Peer Support is a trans woman, experienced in facilitating gender expansive peer support groups, who held a seminar, called, "Talking in Circles" and a "Deep Listening Circle" workshop. Although not a Buddhist, she shared her wisdom and insight open-mindedly and respectfully, ethics that are also parts of Buddhist ethics.

Also, here the attendees were diverse, not only trans, gender non-conforming, and non-binary people, but every one of the queer community; and also allies who enjoyed being included again.

The 4thIQBC will take place in Fall 2024.

Dr. Jampa Wurst (they, them)
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<https://iqbc.org>



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Happy New Year! Time to get back in the garden, at least if you have any clearance to do. The mild winter we have had so far is convincing the plants it is nearer spring than it actually is so watch out for some surprises.

I have Fuchsias in my garage actively growing which is crazy. One thing I noticed though which is common in such a situation – i.e. frost free, that aphids were present and damaging the young shoots I immediately sprayed the plants with a systemic insecticide and it cleared the aphids quickly – check your over wintering plants for the same problem, don't leave them else the new shoots will be distorted.

Even in an unheated greenhouse you can move on some plants such as cuttings from herbaceous plants. I've got some newly rooted cuttings of *Iris germanica* which I've potted up into 3" pots.



They will develop their roots more than anything but as the weather improves, the leaves will grow too. No need for any fertiliser on anything just yet. Don't get too carried away as it is early yet unless you have heat or heated propagator.

A lot of people like to start their tomato seeds off at this time of year. They will germinate quickly in a heated propagator but then you have the problem of where to put them after that. Most gardeners end up with every window ledge full of young seedlings, which is fine providing the other half doesn't object but the seedlings will get too tall and thin if they are in too warm a place and they are useless for planting out then. Better to wait a while else you may have to start again.

Your cold greenhouse is still handy for things like herbs that you are sheltering from the worst of the winter. You can get them growing earlier than if they stay outside. Check the moisture levels of any plants you have under cover, don't let them dry out, they still need a little water to survive. Keep rubbish out of the pond as it will sink if you don't and contribute to poor water quality as it breaks down.

Things you can do in your garden include adding some natural slow-release fertiliser such as hoof and horn or bone meal – these are very cheap, natural and take time to break down so would help plants in early

spring. Another thing is to buy your supplies for the new season. Right now there should be plenty of stock but leave it until March and you might need to start searching for those pots etc.

If you are tempted to start some of your seeds off, use new compost so it is pest and disease free. If you can manage to make your own, find a way to sterilise it. You don't need to add fertiliser for seed compost and it should be free draining so add either horticultural sand, perlite or vermiculite to peat or peat substitute at a rate of 50/50.



Far left – useful cell trays good for raising seeds so you don't have to transplant from a seed tray.

Left newly germinated and pricked out tomato seedlings – plant to just below the leaves so the stem is mostly covered.



Plant of the Month

A new feature this year is to focus on one or more plants of particular interest that month. This month is for Snowdrops. The amazing thing is that this year I took photos of my flowering Snowdrops prior to Christmas day. That is about a month earlier than I would expect and looking at other people's postings, a lot of you are in the same boat out there. Before we think anything too drastic has happened, I am reminded we had a cold spell of maybe a week or so and then prolonged mild temperatures. From the plant's point of view especially an early one like the Snowdrop, it has had a cold period – winter then relatively mild – early spring and so it is time to flower. This is similar to what you would do with tree or shrub seeds you wanted to grow. First give them a period of artificial cold followed by a period of relative warmth, and they will germinate. The seed is convinced it is time to grow or in this case the bulb is stimulated to flower.

Snowdrops



Two different varieties of Snowdrops. You can extend the flowering period by using multiple varieties. For best results buy and plant "in the green" one of the few bulbs to do this with. In other words you plant while in leaf not when just a dry bulb – they transplant much more successfully this way.

"Don't worry about the earliness of the Snowdrops, enjoy the early colour - just don't start pricking out all over the place, you don't want frozen assets after all"



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Herne Bay LGBTQ+ Society was set up by a trans male and a bisexual female who live in Herne bay Kent and wanted to offer other LGBTQ+ people in Herne bay an wider area

www.facebook.com/groups/238383438252893

Hblgbtqsociety@outlook.com

Phone: 07857966507



The Open Table Network (OTN) began because many churches and their congregations do not easily, kindly or honestly welcome LGBTQIA+ people, therefore, many LGBTQIA+ people have nowhere spiritually to belong.

<https://opentable.lgbt/>

Hblgbtqsociety@outlook.com

Phone: 07501753618



FFLAG is a national voluntary organisation and registered charity. We are dedicated to supporting parents and families and their LGBT+ members.

We offer support to local parents groups and contacts in their efforts to help parents and families understand, accept and support their lesbian, gay, bisexual and transgender members with love and pride.

www.fflag.org.uk

support@fflag.org.uk

Phone: 0300 688 0368



Bereavement can affect people in different ways, there is no right or wrong way to feel. It is a distressing yet common experience that can involve many difficult emotions. I'm here to help and support you through this distressing time in your life so let's talk.

Email: treetopsmount@yahoo.com

Facebook Group: Philip Parslow Celebrant



Black and Brown Rainbow provides specialist support for LGBTQIA+ people from all ethnic minority backgrounds.

email: info@blackandbrownrainbow.com

Helpline Hours Monday 6pm to 8pm Wednesday 6pm to 8pm Phone: 0800 054 1057



Operating Mondays, we offer a phone helpline services from 5pm - 8.30pm every week.

You can call normally or via Whatsapp.

07395 355 066 or 0800 233 5066



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If you run an LGBTQ+ support group or if you are a national organisation that supports LGBTQ+ people and would like to be listed here in the LGBTQ+ Support pages please do get in touch.

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Cheer Up!!! 2023 it's a wrap Pete!!!
As Cheer Up celebrated its 11th birthday this year, 2023 proved to be another exciting year filled with fun, love and CHEER, now a regular fixture at London's iconic The Royal Vauxhall Tavern, Cheer Up also began events this year at Zodiac Bar London and Manchester's AREA as well as hosting events across Liverpool prior, during and after this years Eurovision Song Contest.

Hi Mario I hope you are doing well, so what a year 2023 has been for Cheer Up, can I ask what event or occasion has really stood out in 2023 and why?

Mario Kyriacou – For me, any event which Cheer Up is lucky to have a special guest perform is always a special occasion and in 2023 have had some of the best join us once again with Sinitta in The Royal Vauxhall Tavern in April, Sinitta at the RVT had to happen and I recall back in October 2021 when doing the roadshow with Sinitta, sitting in the car music blasting away that one day Cheer Up will be at The Royal Vauxhall Tavern and that we would do an event there together, happy days.

It was amazing to have our Sonia back with us in Manchester in November, especially during her return to Eurovision this year and it was wonderful to have Samantha Fox join us in July up in Manchester as this event was a long time coming, to be honest

since Samantha's first appearance in London back in 2018 there has been talks behind the scene with Samantha and her wife Linda about this, so was glad to finally make it happen and up North as well, with Samantha being a constant this year, with doing the events, a trip up to Liverpool and also getting to interview Samantha for your magazine to.



Amazing performances to one side though, I have to say the Kylie Minogue "Tension" album party in RVT was something very special, being massive Kylie fan's at Cheer Up and having prior to Kylie announcing her brand new album release this year Cheer Up had already organised the "Kylie 35" event in London's Zodiac Bar, which was outstanding, that event in the summer felt like a pure fandom gathering, almost like a fan-club meet from 1988 it was brilliant. The "Tension" album party followed on the album's day of release in September, it was like the pop worlds aligning, London itself was buzzing with Kylie fans due to Kylie's pop up store on Regent Street, the whole occasion really gave everyone a (Vegas) HIGH and had a sense of Christmas time around it.



Talking of Christmas another occasion which felt quite magical and personal was Eurovision Song Contest being hosted in my home town of Liverpool, honestly that week felt like an all inclusive holiday with some of the best people, hosting and being part of 5 events in one week, really did give me a buzz, honestly that week I be setting up a night with Nicki French while Cheryl Baker would wander in to one of the venues I was working it, asking for directions to a place and to be surrounded by Eurovision royalty throughout, it also felt grander as the with the Eurovision week falling across King Charles Coronation, truly felt regal and gave me a new found love for Eurovision and was great to work in partnership with other talented individuals and event organisers like EuroClub and some brilliant venues in Liverpool, Kitty's Showbar, The Yacht and Camp and Furnace.



Talking of partnerships it was lovely to be asked by Gary and Dave to be part of their Energise 30 celebrations in London's The Two Brewers,

with Energise records celebrating its 30th anniversary, that whole day felt like the most random family gathering, with aunts, cousins, friends it was great to see Denise Waterman perform with Steve and Julie as Tight Fit as over the last number of years Denise has become a great friend and HUGE supporter of Cheer Up. It was also lovely to catch up after 5 or so years with Sid (Haywoode), it felt like time had stood still as we caught up, as it did catching up with Tony King and his Hit Factory pal Pete Hammond and Phil Harding, yet it wouldn't be an Energise celebration with Nicki French who I realised the other day I have had the pleasure of working alongside on and at events 4 times in a space of 14 months.



So talking of occasions you was part of Pride across the UK, tell us more about that?

Mario Kyriacou: Following on from being part of Pride in London's 50th anniversary in 2022 it was another honour to parade at Brighton & Hove Pride in August, which also celebrated their 50th anniversary in 2023. I love Brighton, I used to live there for a number of years as well as London before that, I actually came out in London when I was 16,

I left school after completing my GCSE's and was on that train to Euston with my three huge suitcases stuffed with clothes and CD's and headed to where the streets were paved of gold haha. My first Pride I attended was in 1995 in London when I was 17, I loved that Pride as I was with Dannii Minogue and while backstage got to chat to Boy George and Alison Moyet, I loved Pride when it was in a park setting, that is why I love Brighton & Hove Pride who have their main event in Preston Park.



This year like last year's Pride in London parade we was joined by Hazell Dean and her wonderful family, the queen of Hi-NRG but also the Queen of Prides and what they stand for. Though it was a wet and very windy August 2023 Saturday in Brighton it didn't dampen the mood, if anything I think it added to it as the streets of Hove and Brighton towards Preston Park was full of love and support with tens of thousands of people everywhere you looked, to me Pride is a celebration of our unique

community but more so it's a statement, to be visible, to be proud, to come together. This year I also attended both Liverpool Pride and Sefton Pride in Southport and was asked by Southampton Pride to be part of their main stage line up, that was incredible spinning the tunes that make Cheer Up great to thousands of people, that was an experience and an incredible reaction. I am also in talks with Cyprus Pride who over the last few years have hosted Pride events and with my family coming from there it's a progress which I applaud, personally and professionally.

Thank you for sharing this, it does feel like 2023 has been a busy year and with 2024 around the corner, what plans do you have for the forthcoming year ahead?

Mario Kyriacou: This New Year's Eve Cheer Up is joining the campstastic Centre Stage Brighton for one of the greatest parties ever, I love Brighton and to be there for NYE is magical but to see the new year in with the fantastic Sinitta and Sonia and so many incredible friends, it's going to be something else and what an incredible way to see in 2024, I am so excited for this and for the year ahead.

At the end of January, I am joining Mighty Hoopla for their weekender in Bognor Regis Butlins which they have announced will be their final one Bognor, so its bittersweet really but made up to be part of what Mighty Hoopla has created and will continue to do for years to come. I am excited to announce Cheer Up will be back at the iconic The Royal Vauxhall Tavern in 2024 even more with Cheer Up's first event there being "A ton of hits" celebrating 40 years since Stock Aitken Waterman's first single release and also Cheer Up's 100th event.

As well as RVT we'll be back at central London's Zodiac Bar with some great events, I was lucky to be asked by Madonna fan party who came along to this year's Kylie Vs Madonna event at Zodiac to collab with them in October, organising the Madonna Celebration tour launch event, from that we'll be back at Zodiac for Madonna "Like a prayer 35th anniversary" party in March and can also reveal that there be some very special events with some very special guests coming up in Zodiac across the first part of 2024 as well as talks with a very special Stock Aitken Waterman star who I am chatting with about a huge return plus like I mentioned it's the 40th anniversary since Stock Aitken Waterman teamed up as a trio and gave us all those fantastic hits & tricks.

As always Cheer Up wouldn't be doing what it does without all the love and support from each and everyone who comes along, who sends greetings and wishes and who continue to celebrate what Cheer Up does from the Stock Aitken Waterman events, Kylie parties, pop occasions and Prides the love for the music and the artists who we celebrate and champion, THANK YOU for what has been a memorable year and look forward to more, more, more.



LOVE Wins CHARITY CALENDAR

Forever with Pride will be 3 years old on the 1st
June 2024

To mark this milestone we have decided to launch a calendar and at the same time we are going to be sponsoring 12 LGBTQ+ Charities. We have 72 square logo boxes to fill so if you would like to be in one or more of them drop us an email right away time will run out fast!

F.W.P

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Kellie and her latest boxing sensation, Cathy McAleer.

KNOCK OUT BLONDE

Frank Maloney was one of the boxing world's most successful promoters, with undisputed world champion, Lennox Lewis, as the crown jewel in his stable of fighters.

Frank had it all. Money, fame and a loving wife and family by his side. It would seem like the perfect formula to a man's happiness - but there was one problem.

Every night when Frank's head hit the pillow and he closed his eyes...He dreamed of being a woman.

"I've always known I was very different, from the age of 3 and 4... I am born in the wrong body."

Frank tried his best to repress these feelings by diving headfirst into his business and outworking most of his contemporaries. This level of dedication drove Frank to incredible heights, but the hard work and constant focus was all just a smoke screen, a distraction, a way for him to block the growing desire to be true to his heart and become a woman.



Despite the notoriety and money that came along with Frank's success, he was spiraling out of control on a downward path, filled with depression and fueled by alcohol. Frank hit rock bottom, and even tried to commit suicide on more than one occasion.



After decades of inner turmoil, Frank finally decided to fade into the past, and allow Kellie to slowly emerge. What started out as a clandestine escape - trying on female clothes, wearing make-up and wigs, and even attending secret transgender parties - eventually evolved into a full-time, permanent life decision. A full transition into Kellie, the woman that had always occupied the core of Frank's being.

This powerful story explores truth and denial, confronting uncertainty, and ultimately accepting ourselves for who we are. Using never-before-seen archival footage, along with exclusive interviews from family and colleagues throughout her career in concert with cinematic reenactments, we dive deep inside the mind of a human struggle strong enough to take a life, or in this case, give birth to a new one.

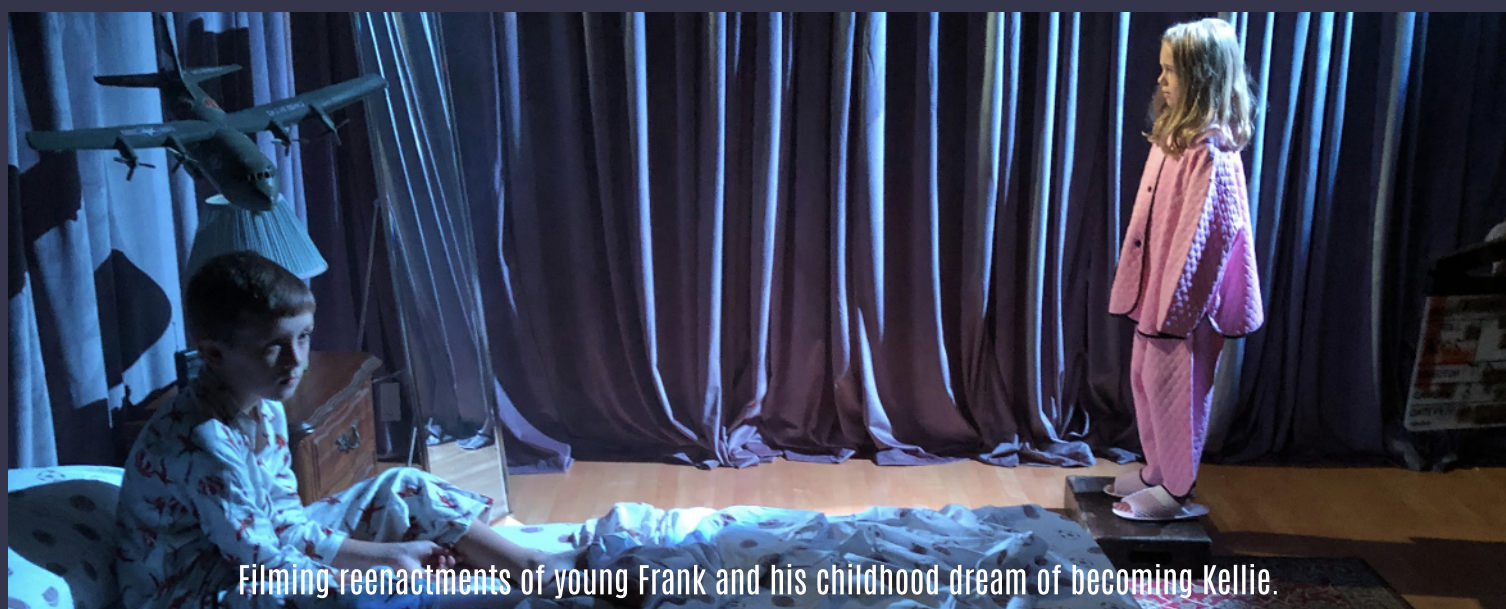


Kellie and her three adoring daughters.

Kellie's unique journey takes us through the male-dominated industry of professional boxing, rife with testosterone, bullies and closed-minded old-world thinkers.

Through the help of family, counselors and even some unlikely friends, Kellie rises from despair, willing to risk it all to overcome all odds and gain acceptance from not only her peers in the boxing world, but more importantly her friends and family. To quote the great Shakespeare...

"This above all: To thine own self be true..."



Filming reenactments of young Frank and his childhood dream of becoming Kellie.



Actress Chelsea Brickham playing Frank and Kellie in the reenactments.



Alexandra Billings with Jeffrey Tambor in
Transparent.



Featuring

ALEXANDRA BILLINGS

Consulting Producer

Alexandra Billings (she/her) is a renown American actor and activist and star of *Wicked* on Broadway and the first openly transgender woman that has appeared on the show. Billings is the second openly transgender woman to have played a transgender character on television, which she did in the 2005 made-for-TV movie *Romy and Michele: In the Beginning*. She is also known for portraying the recurring character Davina in the Amazon series *Transparent* and has played transgender characters in *ER*, *Eli Stone*, *How to Get Away with Murder*, *Grey's Anatomy* and *The Conners*. She also starred in the Broadway hit musical *Wicked*.

In addition to being a consulting producer on *Knock Out Blonde*, Billings makes an onscreen appearance in the film to discuss the struggles and the progress of the trans rights movement globally.



Alexandra starring in *Wicked* and narrating *Knockout Blonde*.



CHELSEA BRICKHAM

Associate Producer

Chelsea Brickham (she/her) was born Feb 6 1982 in Maryland. She grew up in Texas, spent some years overseas in Japan with military parents and later went to college in New England for Electrical Engineering. Chelsea is an actress, model and producer and is presently undergoing her transition process. She portrays both Kellie and Frank in the film.



Kellie Maloney being interviewed, Director Rick Lazes with Chelsea on set, and teenage Frank learns to box.



In August 2014, Maloney announced that she wished to be known as "Kellie" and that she was undertaking gender reassignment.

Maloney later appeared in the fourteenth series of Celebrity Big Brother in August 2014. She has been described as one of the most well-known transgender people in Britain.



KELLIE MALONEY

Executive Producer

Kellie Maloney (she/her) is an English boxing manager and promoter, as well as a television personality. She managed Lennox Lewis who earned the title of undisputed heavyweight champion of the world under Maloney.

This made Maloney the first Briton to manage a British heavyweight champion in almost a century, according to the BBC.

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WINNER



The conflicted struggle of a woman desperately seeking her true identity

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Philip Parslow

Celebrant



Hello there, I am Philip Parslow, a Monmouthshire Celebrant living in Abergavenny, I am able to cover Monmouthshire, Powys and Herefordshire. I work in social care looking after adults with learning disabilities. I am a warm and friendly person who likes a laugh and meeting new people, you are most welcome to get in touch for an informal chat to talk about and to create with you a bespoke Ceremony that will make your special day magical and memorable.

Here is everything that do I do Wedding, Civil Partnership, same Sex Wedding, Wedding Vowel Renewal, Baby Naming Ceremony, Funeral, Memorial Service and Bereavement Counselling.





Crystal and Queenie

Embracing 2024:
Resolutions,
Pride Bookings and Beyond!

linktree

Right then Kids, the tinsel has been packed away and as the glitter of the party season settles, it's time to set our sights on the exciting new year of 2024!

However, as we bid farewell to Christmas, let's take a moment to discuss the unique challenges entertainers face in the aftermath of the party season and the potential lack of work that lies ahead.





And also, let's dive into what's in store for us, from smashing resolutions, the inevitable post-Christmas weight loss and how we have turned our 2024 calendar upside down. Right then Kids, the tinsel has been packed away and as the glitter of the party season settles, it's time to set our sights on the exciting new year of 2024! However, as we bid farewell to Christmas, let's take a moment to discuss the unique challenges entertainers face in the aftermath of the party season and the potential lack of work that lies ahead. And also, let's dive into what's in store for us, from smashing resolutions, the inevitable post-Christmas weight loss and how we have turned our 2024 calendar upside down.

As the echo of New Year confetti subsides, our marvellous entertainers breathe a sigh of relief. After working those long hours, they deserve a well-earned break.

well-earned break. However, that break can be a double-edged sword. While recuperating from the exhausting party season is necessary, it can also bring uncertainty about the future. January can be a slow month for our dazzling entertainers, and the lack of work can be frustrating and concerning.

We've all experienced it – once the sparkle of the holiday season fades, a wave of melancholy can descend upon us. It's important to acknowledge these feelings and take care of our mental health. Remember, we're in this together, and there are resources available to help us navigate any low tides. Reach out to friends, family, or seek professional support if needed. There's no shame in nurturing our emotional well-being.

We went to our happy place this Christmas, the West-End, yes we're those gals - but we just love the magic! If only we could get into 'drag' in 30 seconds *like we saw in Mrs. Doubtfire*.

As we bid farewell to the party season, a new calendar of private events and Gay Pride bookings awaits us. For ourselves, this feels like a brand-new adventure - for the first time in our careers we've cleared our diaries of any fixed residencies - allowing us to grab this year by the disco ball and venture forth bringing the Crystal & Queenie show to the wider audience - how exciting!

Talking of drag queens... how fabulous was Cher's Christmas Album?! Rumour has it there is to be another 'Cher Farewell Tour'.

And again... Drag Queens... How fantastic was Jane McDonald's Christmas Eve Special! I'll admit I have forced Queenie into not one, but two dates on the Jane McDonald tour, "It better be worth the money Crystal... Row B? If she tries to knock

out *Madonna - Frozen* - I'm off! Although I am partial to her version of *Jai-Ho!*"



Happy New Year Lets Make 2024 Fabulous

Crystal & Queenie

"Queenie... New Year's resolutions, what do you have planned?", "I'll have lost 2 stone by the 10th" As far as resolutions go - Weight loss is pretty standard for many of us. We've promised to become those Gals that post weekly gym updates - *If we did, they'd only last until Valentine's Day.*

Of course, we joke about weight loss, we're not actually that conscious about body image - but let's be honest we have sequin dresses to fit back into. In 2024, let's not just survive, but thrive in a world that embraces our authenticity and champions inclusivity. Embrace the spotlight, uplift one another, reminding the world that love will always conquer hate. As Crystal always says, "If you can be anything in this world, be kind". Queenie laughs: "Oh yeah, unless it's annoying customer asking for a rubbish song"

Stay tuned for more adventures, live on Rhubarb Radio every Wednesday from 8-10pm, at your Wedding, Christening or Restaurant opening (Queenie loves a free lunch) and, of course, right here at Forever with Pride!





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The Q LGBTQ Creative Network

23 for 2023: Standout Music of the Year

As we step out of 2023 and into 2024, the queer music landscape continues to evolve with an eclectic mix of genres, innovative sounds, and boundary-pushing artists. The year ahead promises an exciting burst of fresh perspectives, sonic adventures, and undiscovered talents that will captivate our ears and resonate with our souls.

Before closing out 2023, we wanted to take a look back through the year and highlight 23 standout artists who helped make the year the knockout that it was. These artists have been at the forefront of redefining how queer music exists in the industry. They have challenged convention and stereotypes, and leave an indelible mark on our ears and on our hearts. From genre-bending pioneers to lyrical wordsmiths, and virtuosic instrumentalists to experimental visionaries, the class of 2023 represents a diverse spectrum of talent that transcends the ordinary.

While this list can, and should, far exceed the number 23, we wanted to choose a strong selection of the artists and music that has impacted us. These are just some of the next wave of sound that shaped the year, forged connections, sparked conversations, and ultimately helped make 2023 a memorable year in the ever-evolving world of music.

Alextbh

The return of Alextbh is finally over. The artist is back and with his return came some of his best releases yet. The Malaysian artist continued to put his LGBTQ pride front and centre with honest and thought-provoking lyrics. He kept us spellbound with tracks like "Her" and "A Hundred Lives" until finally receiving his impressive new 10 track album "It's All Good". If 2023 is any indication, Alextbh is ready to take center stage in the queer music evolution.

Critical Cut: Her



Armand Joubert

South African rising star has worked tirelessly over the past number of years, building a name and a much-loved following. But 2023 saw the artist take it up 10 notches when he began to also release music recorded in the South African language of Afrikaans. Thus cementing himself as one of South Africa

Critical Cut: Met Jou Klere Af



Bryce Bowyn

Bryce Bowyn has always been fueled by music energy. He's delivered track after track swimming in seductive dance and electro beats and moving us to groove our best life. But 2023 gave us a Bryce Bowyn with a little something extra. The gift of score! In 2023 Bryce Bowyn delivered one of his strongest releases yet, the title track to the audio play and podcast "The Devils of Dupont". Shifting out of the dance arena, Bryce dove headfirst into creating a darker, dramatic and bold piece that has put a whole new spotlight on the artist. One that has us asking "please sir, can we have some more".

Critical Cut: Devils of DuPont

youtu.be/3s2gcjxOhy0?si=KR_bmt_gunqMoGfK

Chaz Cardigan

The fearless renegade of queer music, Chaz Cardigan is open, honest, and unapologetic about who he is as an artist and a person. Wearing his experiences musically and openly, he has once again returned to deliver top tier sonics wrapped around insightful, clever, and often political lyrics, all driven home by an unbridled passion.

Critical Cut: It's Gonna Be Great (Hallelujah)

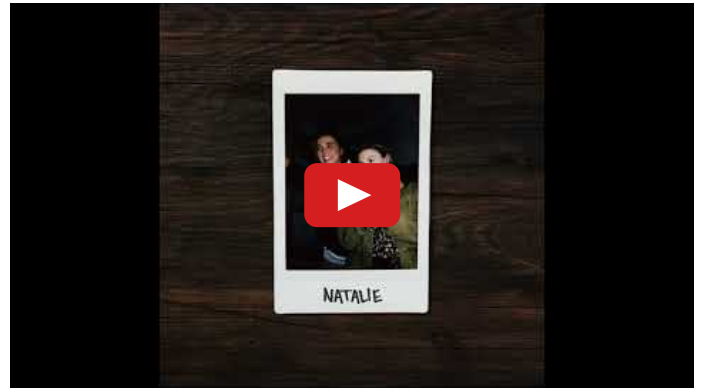
youtu.be/S8RM1C7yCos?si=8o5d2_R4Tu4nDNIm

Emory Parker

Hitting the scene in late 2022, Emory Parker strapped on and laced up some sturdy s*** kickers and decided that she was going to make 2023 hers. And one year later after the release of impressive singles "Fall Back Into You" and "Drinking Alone", her debut EP "Natalie" arrived along with the title track release.

Emory Parker is tomorrow's emerging radio icon.

Critical Cut: Natalie



2023's talent discovery. Fred Roberts went from YouTube/Tik Tok crooner to blistering pop sensation. Stepping into our ears and hearts with his online covers, Fred Roberts delivered a tour de force debut with his infectious emotional bop "Runaway" and never slowed down.

Critical Cut: Runaway



Gary Beals

The man, the myth, the legend. Gary Beals didn't just re-emerge into Canadian music, he completely obliterated all expectations and dropped one of the best albums of the year with "The Melody Within". Gary Beals has left the days of Canadian Idol in the past and has taken his rightful place as a Canadian legend.

Critical Cut: Good People, Good Vibes

youtu.be/8XMIbxrURSU?si=37iI5f34Hf8C2kMI

Gia Woods

Hot off the heels of an incredible 2022, Gia Woods continued her stellar rise. Leaving behind the euphoric disco world of “Heartbreak County”, Gia put the pedal to the metal and drove straight into our lives with the electrically explosive follow up EP, the appropriately titled “Your Engine”. There’s no slowing down for the Gia machine.

Critical Cut: Elevation



Good Dear Good

From local band to one of Canada’s brightest up-and-coming show stoppers, the little band that could Good Dear Good dropped their latest album “Arrival” in 2023 and proved that they’re just getting started. While keeping their Atlantic Canadian seasoning, Good Dear Good have been showing their mettle as a band with live performances that illustrate their cohesion as a tight and unique unit that feels like family. The sky’s the limit for Good Dear Good.

Critical Cut: Coffee and Sunshine



Gregory Dillon

The voice, the sass, the cheek, Gregory Dillon continues to be one of the best artists around. And his 2023 roll up to the release of his upcoming 2024 EP has shown everyone that there’s very little he can’t do as far as music is considered. The release of his mid 2023 single “Genevieve” was a call to action that new Dillon was going to be something else. And it was no lie as follow up tracks “Hot Scars, Pretty Lies”, “Drive”, and “James Dean” have set the streams afire.

Critical Cut: Genevieve

youtu.be/Jb9fyYqosYw?si=m7VOLY-Pa2-UbcpZ

HECTIC

Known more from his behind the scenes mixing and mastering acrobatics, the UK electro wizard HECTIC has become a “go to” wunderkind for artists everywhere. His 2023 reads like a resume of remix bliss. With a knack for pure conceptual direction, HECTIC takes everything to the next level. And when it’s his own music, it’s that much sweeter.

Critical Cut: The Light

youtu.be/limPQ_MQM0w?si=XAK4sMUR-1ETfeb4

Jordy

What a journey Jordy has been on. One of the hardest working artists, Jordy kicked off 2023 with his reimagined version of the Nine Days classic “Absolutely (Story of a Girl)”. Jordy’s “Story of a Boy” became a love letter to every queer boy and he quickly claimed our collective hearts. Added to that an appearance on Kelly Clarkson and being added to radio around North America, Jordy became the name on everyone’s lips and in everyone’s ears.

Critical Cut: Story of A Boy

<https://youtu.be/Rztr2-9498w?si=Tpu73PKOIIFgxBtN>

Kaleena Zanders

What can be said other than BIG SOUND LIVES HERE! Kaleena Zanders attacks her music with passion and joy and it's immediately noticeable through the playfulness and ferocity that envelopes each and every release. 2023 became the year the world could not help but notice, celebrate, and fall in love with Kaleena Zanders.

Critical Cut: Real Love

youtu.be/YKnlsvSBF8?si=Y_EDghTlftPYfy-7

Leanne Hoffman

2023 was a year made for Leanne Hoffman. After a hiatus, the Berklee alum came back with a double shot TKO in the form of an album and companion anthology of poetry both called "The Text Collector". The words, the music, the sublime intoxication of imagination and concept, has made Leanne Hoffman one of the most exciting artists of 2023

Critical Cut: Sex With You

<https://youtu.be/bGMfyfMGkO8?si=fbUJWqZPMoTGzEkf>

Mariah Counts

Bubbling under the surface of music the past couple of years, 2023 saw Mariah Counts find a new confidence and strong musical footing that moved her from releasing music to taking aim, firing strong at the bullseye, and effortlessly landing her mark. Now staking her claim and taking her seat at the music table, Mariah Counts has set herself up to be a force to be reckoned with in 2024.

Critical Cut: Favorite Girl



morgxn

morgxn continues to be the guiding light in queer music. With every release we learn more about him and ourselves. He provides us a safe space to exercise a level of self-examination, asking us to think broader and be more thoughtful. But always with care and a bright vision of hope. His 2023 was filled with remarkable sound, but he ends it in true morgxn fashion, with a song that exemplifies exactly how so many in the world are feeling in his release "To be Human".

Critical Cut: To Be Human



Shawnee Kish

Contemporary Indigenous pop singer-songwriter Shawnee Kish has long been a name in the Canadian music scene, and 2023 gave us music from the artist that had us salivating for more with each release until the eventual release of her latest EP "Revolution". The EP and its 6 tracks are filled with foot stompin' soul, spirit, and bring the house down vocals and is a 2 ton musical signifier to the world that Shawnee Kish is here and ready to rock.

Critical Cut: No Evil

youtu.be/SUKqyxvbwvl?si=88bPxVUfMow92Grn

Sinzere

Sinzere is an undeniably dynamic surge of electricity cutting through the world of Hip-Hop, funk, and rap. With each new entry into her musical catalogue, Sinzere brings,

pump, thump, thrash, and splash to the airwaves and fills them with a flurry of vibelicious goodness. Swag for days! There's no denying the sheer level of personality and magic that Sinzere generates and commands and we're all absolutely falling under her spell.

Critical Cut: Rick Flair Flo

youtu.be/wjv9dPp0y2c?si=1L-E_y60m4rAeswg

Tafari Anthony

It's Tafari Anthony's world and we're just lucky to be able to be part of it. To say that 2023 was a great year for the artist would be an understatement of epic proportions. The releases were a sweltering inferno of pure R'nB pop perfection. His 2023 debut album "When I Met Your Girlfriend" is a masterclass in song creation, with each of the 16 tracks woven together to create a musical smackdown you won't be able to turn off.

Critical Cut: Falling Back

youtu.be/YlyZrPGuFcc?si=EuErU2QFNgc0dGli

Wild Black

Wild Black continues to impress, and in 2023, the Canadian dynamo served up a tasting platter of delicious pop and R'nB that took us to the moon and back. With influences from the 80's and 90's, Wild Black exudes quiet stardom against a glaringly loud accumulation of some of the most infectious music being created today.

Critical Cut: Stay Dreamin'

youtu.be/OGflwORImJo?si=VsSDRmljrO7Uu_Nj

Zach Palmer

Entering into the music scene quietly, Zach Palmer made a deafening impact in 2023 when he released his beautifully crafted song "I Think I Waited For You". The track introduced new listeners to the artist who uses a deftness in storytelling to engage emotion through human experience with a rawness and honesty that will leave you speechless. Each track that followed in 2023

was that and so much more.

Critical Cut: I Think I Waited for



Zee Machine

The elder statesman of queer pop funk, Zee Machine is one of the most loved music artists in queer music. He continues to draw us in with his addictive charisma and pure love of music. And each release is always an experience that leaves you on a high. Whether it's a rock out anthem, a pop banger, or his own unique take on a Whitney Houston classic, Zee Machine fills us to the brim with good vibes and leaves us beaming with pride.

Critical Cut: Making Diamonds

youtu.be/q0nxOuOKwYg?si=Qp2FhaNUhzbLEKI

X.ARI

The wild card in queer Canadian music! X.ARI blasted through 2023 with an epic 11 singles and a 6 track EP collection, all of which ignited our inner dance child and begged to be released. From the beginning of the year straight through to X.ARI's final release "Loud", it's been an unyielding adventure of queer pride and advocacy, with X.ARI utilizing her music to address issues of mental health, acceptance, and others. With such a large volume of releases in 2023, we can only imagine what 2024 will bring. Whatever it is, we know it'll be pure X.ARI magic.

Critical Cut: Make Me Good

youtu.be/Qi_02EWNoA4?si=xr2b7R0KwT4SGDiE

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The logo for Philip Parslow Celebrant features a stylized rainbow flag on the left and a circular portrait of Philip Parslow on the right. Text to the right of the portrait lists services: Funerals, Civil Partnerships, Same Sex Weddings, Naming Ceremonies and Bereavement Counselling. Below the portrait, it states he is located in Aberavenny, Monmouthshire but can travel for more information, and provides an email address: treetopsmount@yahoo.com.

Philip Parslow Celebrant

Hello, I'm fully trained in the following areas and ready to help and support you: None-Religious Funerals, Civil Partnerships, Same Sex Weddings, Naming Ceremonies and Bereavement Counselling.

I'm located in Aberavenny, Monmouthshire but can travel for more information please do drop me an email.

treetopsmount@yahoo.com

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The logo for Joshua Lloyd features a collage of three images: a person with a rainbow flag, a person with a rainbow flag, and a person with a rainbow flag. Text in the center reads: JOSHUA LLOYD, THE UK'S FASTEST GROWING LGBTQ+ GENDER IDENTITY PRIDE SHOP, @LLOYDLABEL | JLLOYD.CO.UK | #LLOYDLABEL.

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The logo for 'the Q' features a large white letter 'Q' with a rainbow gradient fill. The word 'the' is written in white lowercase letters inside the 'Q'. The background is a rainbow gradient.

the Q

Corporate Sponsor

The logo for Rainbow Traveller features a stylized rainbow heart shape on the left and a small rainbow flag on the right. Text below the heart reads: Rainbow Traveller.

Rainbow Traveller

Platinum Sponsor

The logo for Blake Rave features a circular image of a person with a rainbow flag. Text in the center reads: Blake Rave.

Blake Rave

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The logo for Crystal & Queenie features a photograph of two drag queens, Crystal and Queenie, standing side-by-side. Text below the photo reads: Crystal & Queenie.

Crystal & Queenie

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