

FOREVER WITH PRIDE

Editor

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LGBTQ+ reality stars support charity campaign against criminal and sexual exploitation of young people

Luke-Matthew Iveson (winner of The Great British Sewing Bee 2024), and Dean Quinton (Big Brother 2024 contestant), have joined forces with modern slavery support organisation [Causeway](#) for their latest campaign raising awareness of grooming methods behind sexual and criminal exploitation.

"It can be very hard, once you're in someone's clutches, to escape especially if there is violence or debt involved. Traffickers will do or say whatever they can to keep you feeling powerless, so the more people who know that there's help available, that they're not alone, the better."

Causeway run safehouses and outreach programmes across the UK for survivors of all forms of modern slavery, human trafficking, and exploitation, including many people who identify as LGBTQ+.

Luke-Matthew Iveson

Salford based Luke-Matthew, who is also a drag performer known as Selma Skreams, has lent his support to the '[You're Not Alone](#)' campaign which centres around an awareness-raising social media film, in the hope that young people across the UK will recognise the signs of grooming and exploitation when it's happening to them.

Luke-Matthew said: "I'm supporting Causeway's 'You're Not Alone' campaign as I want to help as many people as possible understand that criminal and sexual exploitation can happen to anyone. Causeway have supported a diverse range of survivors from all backgrounds, who were all tricked, manipulated or forced to do things against their will"

Dean Quinton

Causeway Communications Manager Frankie Elliott said: "Whilst men being exploited for labour make up the highest percentage of modern slavery victims in the UK, LGBTQ+ people face a disproportionately high risk of sexual and criminal exploitation due to vulnerabilities such as social stigma and inadequate support structures. Factors such as family rejection, can lead to homelessness, particularly among LGBTQ+ youth, which can increase vulnerability to grooming, trafficking, and survival sex."

Predators may also befriend or target vulnerable LGBTQ+ people to take advantage of their emotional and social isolation. The 'You're Not Alone' campaign is a way to show anyone experiencing, or at risk, of exploitation, that there's support available."

London based Dean Quinton, who as well as appearing on *Big Brother and Series 1 of The Island with Bear Grylls*, is a DJ on GlitterBeam Radio, has also contributed to Causeway's awareness-raising film.

He said: *"Helping people, especially young people, recognise the signs of grooming, or when they're being manipulated, is a really important way of protecting them from harm."*

"Predators and traffickers will target anyone they think they can control and then make them feel trapped. LGBTQ+ people are also disproportionately affected by exploitation due to often being marginalised as a result of their identity. This campaign from Causeway is a way of showing people that even if they have been exploited or forced to do things against their will, they're not alone. There's help available."

Dean and Luke-Matthew are joined in the [film](#) by actors Jacob Dudman and Isabelle Smith, *Traitors* star Ash Bibi, and lived-experience ambassadors Chantell Hayles and Sabrina Hewitt, who have shared their stories as part of the campaign.

If you are worried that you, or someone you know, may be at risk of exploitation, you can fill in Causeway's free, anonymous online risk-checker here: [Exploitation Risk Checker | Causeway Charity](#)

For more information about *You're Not Alone*, to watch the video, or to access support, visit: www.wearecauseway.org.uk

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The logo for "OUT LOUD P.O.D.C.A.S.T". The words "OUT LOUD" are in a large, white, bold, sans-serif font. Behind the letters are numerous vertical bars of various colors, including purple, blue, green, yellow, orange, and red, creating a rainbow effect. Below "OUT LOUD", the word "P.O.D.C.A.S.T" is written in a smaller, white, sans-serif font, with dots separating each letter.

The OUT LOUD Queer Music Podcast is presented by The Q LGBTQ Creative Network. Hear great Artist interviews and conversations and discover the latest and greatest new music releases by LGBTQ artists from around the globe. Hosted by The Q founder Kenney Fitzpatrick. LGBTQ artists can submit their music at curatedbyq.com to be featured on a podcast episode.



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Let your voice be heard!

The Linktree logo is displayed within a solid blue rectangular box. The logo itself consists of the word "Linktree" in a bold, black, sans-serif font, followed by a stylized asterisk symbol that resembles a tree with three branches.

Linktree*

— CHERRY WEST —

Q&A

Q1: So, who is Cherry West?

Cherry West is an 18-Year-old Drag Queen from Edinburgh (Bonnie Scotland)

I have been doing drag for over 4+ years starting at the age of 14 in my bedroom with a camera and a dream, in the early days of starting drag I became obsessed with TikTok I eventually grew a big social media following doing ads and videos for brands only a small Queen could dream off so getting to work with these huge brands was a surreal experience.

Q2: How did you get started as a Drag Queen?

From watching Rupaul's drag race at a young age I very quickly fell in love with the art form of performing in drag in front of a live audience, coming from a showbiz background I've always loved to create events and make people escape from reality

I grew the courage when I turned 14 and ordered heels and a wig of my birthday money, I went through to my sister's room, and they did my makeup for the first ever time.... I felt like the QUEEN and no one could tell me different, soon after I realised how much work I have to put in if I wanna make a name for myself in this industry, so I ran too TikTok and the rest is history.

Q3: What has been your most memorable moment as a drag queen?

Gosh where can I even start, I still think to this day how I'm actually getting to perform all over the world at the age of 18 from a

residency in Spain Gran Canaria to hitting some of the biggest LGBTIQ clubs in London I think for me a highlight in my drag career was hosting my own Edinburgh pride in 2023.... celebrating and performing in front of 15,000 people was a dream come true and I'm very grateful I was able to host the full event at the age of 16.

Another highlight that I've just accomplished was selling out the Edinburgh fringe festival 2025 in August, I did 12 shows with 5 completely sold out and over 1000 people There was 3500 shows in the fringe knowing people took the time out there trip to come and watch Cherry West off the telly, about an 18-year-old wannabe tv drag superstar.... was a crazy experience.

If you know me I put so much work into my drag and this finally showed me that it's paid off, drag is full of ups and downs it's a true rollercoaster ride of emotions and I'm so grateful I'm able to wake up every day and make people smile.

Q4: Does Cherry West have anything coming up in the future?

I'm very excited to announce I am appearing in the Scottish touring pantomime of Snow White and the seven dwarfs in Aberdeen and Arbroath throughout the whole of December.

Growing up as a kid watching pantomime always wanting to be on that stage during the curtain call and now.... I'm going to be it's very emotional thinking about and I cannot WAIT.

Q5: Who does Cherry West look up to and why?

My biggest drag inspirations are 100% Danny Beard and La Voix the singing sensations who have both appeared on multiple television shows and taken the stages with full force, my stage presence and song choices are definitely inspired by both talents and very grateful that I have close connections with them for advice and how to network.

Q6: What would Cheery West dream be for the future?

Gosh... I could be talking all day on this topic... my dream is to sell out a theatre one woman shows with my name in lights I love performing but I'd also love to continue bringing out music on streaming platforms for people to listen too.

I recently brought out my second single 'I'm Red-y' about my time starting drag and haters puttin me down saying I will never make it....

Q7: Does Cherry West have any words for anyone who may be dreaming of becoming a drag queen?

I love this question..... I think it's so important for everyone to try drag in their life... the feeling of confidence you get from being in drag it's fearless and powerless and that's what I love.

When I first started, I didn't think I would be as confident as I am on stage in drag... a character comes out and you can definitely tell when watching as an audience member.

Grab a cheap wig some makeup and have FUN! Ask around from local queens near you... I always say if you don't ask you don't get.



CHERRY WEST

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"Them"

Remembering the times when we were
still falling in love,
when the sun
would send
specks of gold through
their eyes
every time they
would steal a
glance in my direction.

All the time spent with them
are moments
I can truly say
I'm happy life has sent
my way.

GWENDA'S GARAGE

Out of the Archive, in association with Sheffield Theatres, are proud to present the World Premiere of

"The lesbian musical of the century"

Southwark Playhouse Borough (The Large)

Thu 30 Oct - Sat 29 Nov (Press Night: 4 November)

Tanya Moiseiwitsch Playhouse, Sheffield Theatres

Wed 15 – Sat 25 Oct (Press Night: 16 October)

1980s Sheffield, Thatcher's Britain: politics, passion, protest ... where anything might happen and usually does.

GWENDA'S GARAGE is a **bold new British musical** written by Nicky Hallett, with music by musician and composer Val Regan. The show is produced by **Out of the Archive Theatre** in **association with Sheffield Theatres** (*Standing at the Sky's Edge, Everybody's Talking about Jamie*)

An exuberant call to arms filled with **humour, heart**, and **original songs**, **GWENDA'S GARAGE**

celebrates working-class women, lesbians, and the power of collective action.

Created by an all-lesbian team of writers and composers, the show draws on oral histories from the founders of **GWENDA'S GARAGE**, and women who fought to make space for themselves in a hostile world.

The musical is based on a true story. The real Gwenda's Garage was founded in 1985 in Sheffield, South Yorkshire by three women mechanics: Ros Wollen (aka Roz), Annette Williams, and Ros Wall. They defied the odds in a male-dominated field, by establishing their own repair workshop in what was then a run-down area of the city. Named after Gwenda Stewart, a pioneering, record-breaking racing driver, the garage became a hub for women's education and activism alongside the day-to-day of car repairs.

The story follows mechanics, Bev, Carol and Terry, their apprentice Dipstick, and ally Feona, as they fight Section 28 and advocate the right to live free from prejudice, creating space for women and LGBTQ+ rights. In 2025, as Queer rights continue to be challenged across the world, this rousing new musical based on real life events couldn't be speeding on to stage at a timelier moment.

The show roars into London at the Southwark Playhouse Borough (30 October - 29 November) after revving up at the Tanya Moiseiwitsch Playhouse at Sheffield Theatres (15 - 25 October).

GWENDA'S GARAGE – a **joyful, exuberant, queer**, call to arms, fired by **fun, feminism, friendship**, and above all an affirming belief in the power of collective action.

Join these unstoppable women as they dismantle the patriarchy one spark plug at a time.

Website: www.outofthearchive.co.uk

Instagram: [@gwendasgarage](https://www.instagram.com/gwendasgarage)

Sub-headings

THE MORTICIANS APPRENTICE



By Robin .S. Goodfellow

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Two feral women living our best life – Wilder Ways style

As a child, I loved nothing more than guddling in the mud and asking 'why'? Meanwhile, as a child, my wife was affectionately called 'the noise with dirt on it'! So, it's no surprise we make such a great pair.

When we met 12 years ago, I could never have imagined how wonderful life would become. Life has thrown us more than our fair share of 'lemons' but as I sit to write this, my heart is full, I smile easy and feel overwhelming gratitude.

10 years ago, my wife and I started a great adventure – to follow our childhood passion for horses and dare to believe that we could turn this into a business to support our life. And so, Wilder Ways was born.

**IT'S THE CALL OF THE WILD, THE WILL OF THE HERD, THE THUNDER OF HOOVES, THE POUND OF YOUR HEART, IT IS RIDING....
WILDER WAYS**

I fell in love with the horse aged 5 and have never looked back. Horses teach me patience, humility and how to be still and soften - and these are not my most obvious qualities. My wife describes me as a hedgehog, prickly on the outside and squishy in the middle. With horses, every day is a school day, and I love this constant learning and encouragement to look within.

For my wife, horses have always been about independence and freedom. Aged just 14 she saved up enough money to go out and buy herself a pony – much to her mother's annoyance. That pony taught her how to 'stick on', how to care for another being unconditionally and how to enjoy the sense of enduring love and freedom horses can give you. I believe this is what made her such a wonderful mother and role model to her 3 girls.

Our whole lives we thrived exploring wilderness and Wilder Ways was born of our love for adventure and a desire to share it with others.

Wilder Ways offers all-inclusive adventure riding holidays throughout Scotland's stunning and lesser-known wilderness [Adventure Holidays - Wilder Ways](#). We trail ride mountains, gallop beaches, swim, jump and even arch from horseback. Captivated by human and horse interactions, and the profound way they can help each other, today an increasing part of our business focusses on Horsemanship and Humanship [Horsemanship-Humanship - Wilder Ways](#).

We invite you to explore 'off the beaten track' and be empowered through adventure, as we use creativity and the love of play to install confidence and build connection, all within the nourishing wild canvass of nature.

At the farm you might meet one of our 25 horses, 50 sheep, 4 pigs, 12 chickens, 3 cats and 2 dogs, who all live together in large wild pastures complete with woodlands and rivers. Our 3 daughters are now all grown up and living their own best lives in marine conservation, creative writing and astronomy. We all work hard, but live well. Our core values in work and life are empowerment, environmental responsibility, connection, learning, and magic.

So, whether you are an adventure seeker wanting a trip of a life time, or in need of a personal boost, come and spend a while living the dream.

And 10 years on, are we still living OUR dream...

Making a living out of your passion can be a recipe for disaster. There are times we have prioritised work over family and ourselves as being self-employed can be suffocating. We have spent the last 10 years pouring our energy into making dreams come true for others. It is easy to become drained and lose sight of your own dreams. Two years ago, a series of health scares for us both provided the catalyst we needed to listen to our bodies and take time to breath.

Today, you will still find my wife and I generously pouring our love and energy into every beating heart on the farm, but now this includes ours' too. I cannot tell you how much listening to my body and slowing down to smell the roses has enhanced my life in recent years. The love of a great woman helps enormously, but you can only see beauty in others and the world around you if you treasure the beauty within.

And who are we in spite of Wilder Ways...

Away from our guests, we live very simply in our own little hideaway. We cook on an open fire, run barefoot in the grass, bathe in the river, laugh hard and dance among the trees. We love growing our own food and treasure minimal possessions, almost all of which were hand-made with love. We can hear the river from our bed and relish the changing seasons like an old friend visiting. Life is not an endurance test – it is something to be felt in all its gore and glory and we love it!

We are still two curious minds with mud on them. ***Just two feral women living our best life.***

My name is Cara Gelati, I am 41 years old, I live on a 100-acre farm in Kintyre west Scotland with my beautiful wife Nikki.

We are living our dream – if you need some help to live yours, you'll know where to find us.

Links

www.wilderways.scot

www.facebook.com/wilderways

www.instagram.com/wilderways_adventures

[WILDER WAYS \(2025\) All You Should Know BEFORE You Go \(w/ Reviews\)](#)

[Wilder Ways - YouTube](#)



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Welcome to
Alphabetti ~ Amasatine ~
Miss Serpentina and Lord Skullington





September 2025

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**Gay Gardeners UK, Plants, Seeds and
surplus Exchange Group**

I mentioned in the August gardening insert that I had used some surface pond plants to help give some protection from the Heron. The quality of light we've had over summer meant those plants went crazy and covered the pond. I thinned them out a little, but they came back within a week. One thing they have done is stop evaporation from the pond – the plants have shielded the pond from the effects of the sun, and I haven't had to top the pond up once since we had the hosepipe ban. That's a great tip for the future and the plants aren't weed such as blanket weed so they won't hurt the fish. In

the winter they will die off but are very cheap to buy again in the spring. Water lettuce is one such floating plant.

I did risk putting some fresh turf down that I got very inexpensive from my local DIY store.

They wanted rid of it as it had passed its best and I only wanted a small amount, so I invested. It did go like a straw colour, but the turves were good quality, and you could tell as each piece hung together rather than breaking up.

I have watered it as you're allowed to for new turf for a month and sure enough it is coming back now, we've had a bit of a reprieve from the hottest temperatures. It is amazing how bad turf can look but still come back with watering so don't worry too much if your lawn is looking brown as the

Impatiens and New Guinea Impatiens have loved the sun this year, just remember to water them with your watering can and they will keep flowering right until the first frosts.

I've just completed adding fresh back to my front and back garden and it really helps with water loss but also to offset the colour of your plants and keeps the dreaded weeds down too. Be careful when tidying up garden debris. I got a shock when I went to pick up some dead leaves from my earlier flowering bulbs, inside was an adult hedgehog seemingly hibernating early. I was careful not to disturb and quickly put the leaves etc. back on top. They've had a tough year with it being so hot their favourite food has been in short supply due to the dry weather. This is why mine has decided to hibernate early, I'm sure.

Left – Asian Lilies that are only around 10" tall but still have those huge trumpet shaped flowers that look so impressive. Flowering end of August into September.

Right – Fresh bark mulch really adds to the look of your garden and gives a lift to your other garden features including the plants and stone work.

It might seem early, but I've already received and planted my fresh spring bulbs are reworking my front garden. I got free delivery and an early bird discount and no problem being able to get the varieties I wanted.

If you've been able to keep up with the watering, it's been a good year for fruit and flowers and if we get a mild autumn the dahlias will carry on flowering for weeks yet so dead head them to promote new buds. Don't forget to give them a boost with liquid feed to keep them in good health.

Lavender has been great for the bees and other pollinating insects, but the flowers are finishing now. You can prune them in September by trimming the flower head and taking a little of the soft growth with it. Don't prune back to the hard wood as this doesn't provide new shoots.

No doubt tomatoes and cucumbers are looking rather tired in the greenhouse but there is no rush to clear them out if they have fruit to ripen and still some green leaves. Keep up the feed and water for as long as the plants look worth it. Small cucumbers can be pickled, and green tomatoes will still ripen in a garage or shed and taste great when fried.

- Plant of the Month - Magnolia

I'm picking out Fuchsias this month as I haven't mentioned them much this year and they are still going strong in tubs, hanging baskets and borders when a lot of plants have passed their best.



They come in a vast range of colour choices and really appreciate a good liquid feed. The only thing is they prefer dappled sun rather than full on sun, so it depends on how your garden faces as to which is the best place to put them.

They are easy to grow and branch well when you take out the leader from a stem but if you do that it will be about eight weeks at least before it flowers so don't overdo it or you will lose your blooms.

Left – Pink Galore which is a bit more unusual among the more common colours for Fuchsias and gives a nice contrast to the regular ones.

Right – Swingtime a good favourite with growers and like most Fuchsias is covered in flowers if given a bit of TLC. Liquid tomato feed is convenient cheap and works well.

No frozen assets for sure! The risk more recently is that of over-heating so be careful out there and don't overdo it.

Keep your heavier jobs in the garden to early or late in the day and enjoy the garden for the rest of the time if you can with a long drink with maybe some fresh mint from your herb patch!



The Rainbow Loft – Dundee's New LGBTQIA+ Nightlife Destination

Dundee's nightlife has a new LGBTQIA+ Destination, and it's already making its mark. The Rainbow Loft opened its doors on Saturday 23rd August, transforming the top floor of the iconic Fat Sam's into a vibrant, inclusive space dedicated to the LGBTQIA+ community and allies.

The launch night was nothing short of a triumph – a packed dance floor, euphoric music, and an atmosphere brimming with joy and togetherness.

From the moment the doors opened, the energy was electric. Guests were welcomed into a space that spread warmth and pride, setting the tone for the many Saturday nights to come.

Headlining the opening night was the incredible DJ Ross McGillivray, whose mix of queer anthems, chart-toppers, and

euphoric throwbacks kept the crowd moving until the early hours.

Special guest performers added their own flair, surprising and delighting partygoers throughout the night. The combination of music, lights, and community spirit created an unforgettable launch that the Pride community are still talking about.

The Rainbow Loft is more than just another club – it's a weekly event for those who crave connection, freedom, and a safe space to be themselves. Every Saturday, the venue transforms into a celebration of diversity and self-expression, where judgement has no place and friendship flourishes.

Whether you're a seasoned clubber or stepping onto the dance floor for the first time, The Rainbow Loft promises a welcome as warm as it is vibrant.

The creation of The Rainbow Loft stemmed from a recognition that Dundee's LGBTQIA+ nightlife needed a consistent, dedicated venue.

While Pride events and one-off club nights have brought moments of togetherness in the past, the team behind The Rainbow Loft wanted to provide something more permanent – a weekly event where the community could gather, let loose, and feel at home.

By securing the top floor of Fat Sam's, they paired a familiar location with a bold new vision.

Inclusivity is at the heart of The Rainbow Loft's mission. Security staff are trained in LGBTQIA+ awareness, bar staff embody the spirit of Pride year-round, and the décor celebrates the rainbow in a way that feels authentic and joyful.

The result is a space where every guest can relax, express themselves, and make lasting memories.

Following the success of the opening night, excitement is already building for every Saturday. Social media has been buzzing with photos, videos, and glowing reviews from attendees, with many pledging to return week after week.

The Rainbow Loft isn't just here to add to Dundee's nightlife – it's here to redefine it. After a launch that exceeded all expectations, Saturday nights in the city will never be the same again.



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Bitchin' *Boutique*

CURVACEOUS VINTAGE AND ALTERNATIVE APPAREL

Hi!

My name is Levi, and I live on the Isle of Wight. In 2021, I was offered the amazing opportunity to take over the running of my favourite small business. Bitchin' Boutique has gone from strength to strength.

We are an online store, selling clothing in UK sizes 16-32 (but always happy to order in other sizes by request if they're available). We stock brands such as Hell Bunny, Collectif, Banned, Voodoo Vixen and many more.

We cater for vintage/50s tastes and also alternative/goth.

We have a small selection of accessories and homeware on the website too.

On the website, items are grouped in categories, and there are filtering options to make it easier for you to search for your size without having to scroll through a whole catalogue!



but this would be something we'd love to work towards in the future.

I would also love to explore the possibility of designing our own, ethically and responsibly manufactured, clothing range. However, my dreams for the business are a lot larger than the stock room!

I can't wait to see what is in store for Bitchin' Boutique, I often tell people I have the best job in the world!

I am a one-woman operation, but my husband often helps with the heavy lifting, and at events. He also makes a mean cup of tea, so he's pretty handy to have around. In 2024, we began taking our homeware to local events. Our little black gazebo is Marmite - people generally either love it or hate it! It would be great if we could eventually start taking clothing too, and perhaps trade at larger events on the mainland.

Pride is my favourite local event, everyone is just so lovely and in such good spirits.

My favourite time of the year is autumn. I LOVE Halloween and all things spooky. A cosy cardigan, comfy boots, a true crime podcast, and I'm all set!

We have a purpose-built stock room at home, so all items are readily available and usually dispatched within 1-2 days. We don't have a physical store,

We ship worldwide, and we offer free UK shipping on orders over £75. Use code FOREVER15 for 15% off on your first order.

Website: www.bitchinboutique.co.uk

Facebook:

www.facebook.com/bboutiqueuk01

Insta:

www.instagram.com/bitchinboutique.co.uk

We also have a linked Facebook group for discussions and selling. It's so important to me to have a safe, inclusive space where people feel comfortable to share their outfits or ask questions. I hope to see you there soon!

(Levi, 33, she/her).

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Goodnight Oscar

'Goodnight Oscar' is a fascinating story brought to us by American television star Sean Hayes.

Hayes, the multiple Emmy-award winning actor best known for playing the campy Jack in 'Will & Grace' is remarkable as Oscar Levant, an American pianist, composer, comedian, author, and actor, long forgotten. He was also heavily burdened with mental issues, addicted to prescription drugs, and was committed to a mental hospital at the peak of his popularity.

In this fictionalized version of a few hours in the life of Oscar when he is asked to appear on The Tonight Show with Jack Paar (played by a very good Ben Rappaport), Levant is given furlough from his psychiatric hospital to supposedly attend his daughters graduation but instead heads to the television studio in Burbank, California. His long suffering wife June (an excellent Rosalie Craig) is very supportive and reassures Paar and the head of the network that Levant's appearance will go smooth.

There is a bit of a buildup before Hayes appears on stage as Levant, but when he does the audience applauds enthusiastically, and Hayes kills it with his mannerisms and voice as Oscar Levant, a character just the complete opposite of Jack from 'Will & Grace.'

Levant is not well in the head, he needs more medication (uppers) to get through the live show, but his hospital minder will not allow anymore. But Levant talks the show production assistant (Eric Sirakian) to get it for him right before he goes on, and this puts him over the top during the live interview where he tells several hilarious jokes ('Elizabeth Taylor is always the bride, never the bridesmaid!'). But when Levant plays the piano for the television audience (and us), Hayes gives us a masterful 10 minute piano performance - it is simply amazing - who knew Hayes had this talent? And once done the audience erupts in clapping for several minutes. Actually the whole show holds your attention throughout its 100 minute run time (no interval). 'Goodnight Oscar' is a show with masterclass acting, and we are privileged to see Hayes on stage in London. Thank you thank you Sean, and writer Doug Wright and Director Lisa Peterson, for bringing Oscar's story to life, and to London.\

'Goodnight Oscar' is currently playing at the Barbican Theatre in London, and ends on Sept. 21, 2025. For tickets, please go to:

<https://www.barbican.org.uk/whats-on/2025/event/good-night-oscar>



Wacadoddles

Welcome to the world of the Wacadoddles
these fabulous handmade creations and their
friends are waiting for you to take them home!

Website
www.wacadoddles.com



Tales of the Second City

Misadventures on Birmingham's Gay Scene

Return from Death Mountain

Last summer, my friend Jayhan and his pug joined me and my dog on our favourite walk up the Malvern Hills.

Jay hated every second of it... and I learnt that pugs are not designed for steep inclines. We had to take turns carrying this snuffling potato critter up the hill, while my mutt forged ahead on sturdy little legs.

We found a little pride flag lost under a bench at the base of the hill and proudly planted it at the point where Jay finally announced that he'd HAD ENOUGH; didn't care about reaching the summit; wasn't trekking any further; was going back down; and wanted to return to civilisation ASAP!

On the return train journey home, he persisted in telling anyone who would listen how I had dragged him up 'Death Mountain'.

He has never come on excursion with me again.

On the train home, we sat across the aisle from four chatty Muslim lads, who were fascinated with our dogs.

Turned out they had also spent the afternoon up the hills.

I told them my dog had her first traumatic experience of an electric fence.

"Us too," one lad grinned, then showed us a video of the four of them holding hands, while one grabbed a shocking wire and they all shrieked and spasmed... like happy flappy fish.

"You twats," I howled. "Show me again."

They did... again... and again... and thrice more.

The boys were all in their late teens, but the one they referred to as the 'grown-up' had just turned eighteen.

"This one made us wait for an hour before he turned up," one lad told me, scowling at the youngest, scrawniest, twink in the troupe.

"Don't be too hard on him," I told them, "he was probably up all night watching CBeebies."

Junior pulled his hoodie over his eyes and sulked, as the others fell about laughing.

"We told 'im we are goin' to the deepest darkest countryside... and if any of us is gonna to get raped... it gonna be him!"

Squeal like a pig!

The boys amused themselves by trying to guess our dog's names... but could only come up with Mohammed.

"I did consider calling my last dog 'Mo'," I confessed, "but live on the border of Balsall Heath and Sparkbrook and thought if I shout that name in the local park every lad in the area will turn around."

The boys all nodded in agreement.

Back in the Brum, Jayhan and I headed to Hurst Street for a drink on the gay scene.

A new barman asked to see Jay's ID.

"Mate, I'm Forty-Four!" Jay baulked.

"Oh right, sorry, that's okay then," the barman conceded. "I'm not going to lie though, you're looking good."

We found ourselves a perch outside in the sun.

There was an older trans-woman sat next to us. She was being pestered by four unpleasant drunks. The exchange made me distinctly uncomfortable. The guys practically had the woman penned in and were barraging her with derogatory remarks.

"You've got lippy on your teeth, love," one no-necked numpty barked.

"Yer eye makeup ain't even," scoffed another gammon.

"You look really old," snarled the most pissed of the gang. "How old are ya anyway? Ya must be ancient."

I'd had enough and intervened. "Don't you know you should never ask a lady her age?"

"No, I didn't know," this lowlife sneered. "Maybe my mom didn't raise me properly."

I swivelled on my stool and engaged the target of their attention in conversation, bringing her into our supportive sphere.

The bullies hovered uncertainly for a moment, then skulked away, muttered and grumbled amongst themselves.

"Thank you," the woman signed in relief.

"That was nasty to overhear," I said. "I can only imagine what it was like to be on the receiving end."

She had maintained her composure, handling the harassment with cool restraint and decorum. Sadly, scorn and ridicule are a common part of the trans experience, but you would hope for solidarity in a gay venue.

I'm glad to say people like them are the minority on Birmingham's gay scene.

One small victory against the bullies... but there are always going to be mountains to climb.

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