

NEW ENGLAND'S LGBTQ+ MAGAZINE

VOL. 17

NO. 2

savoirflair

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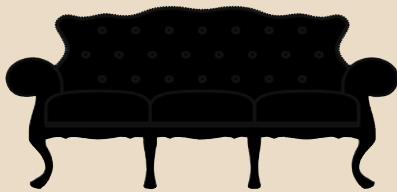


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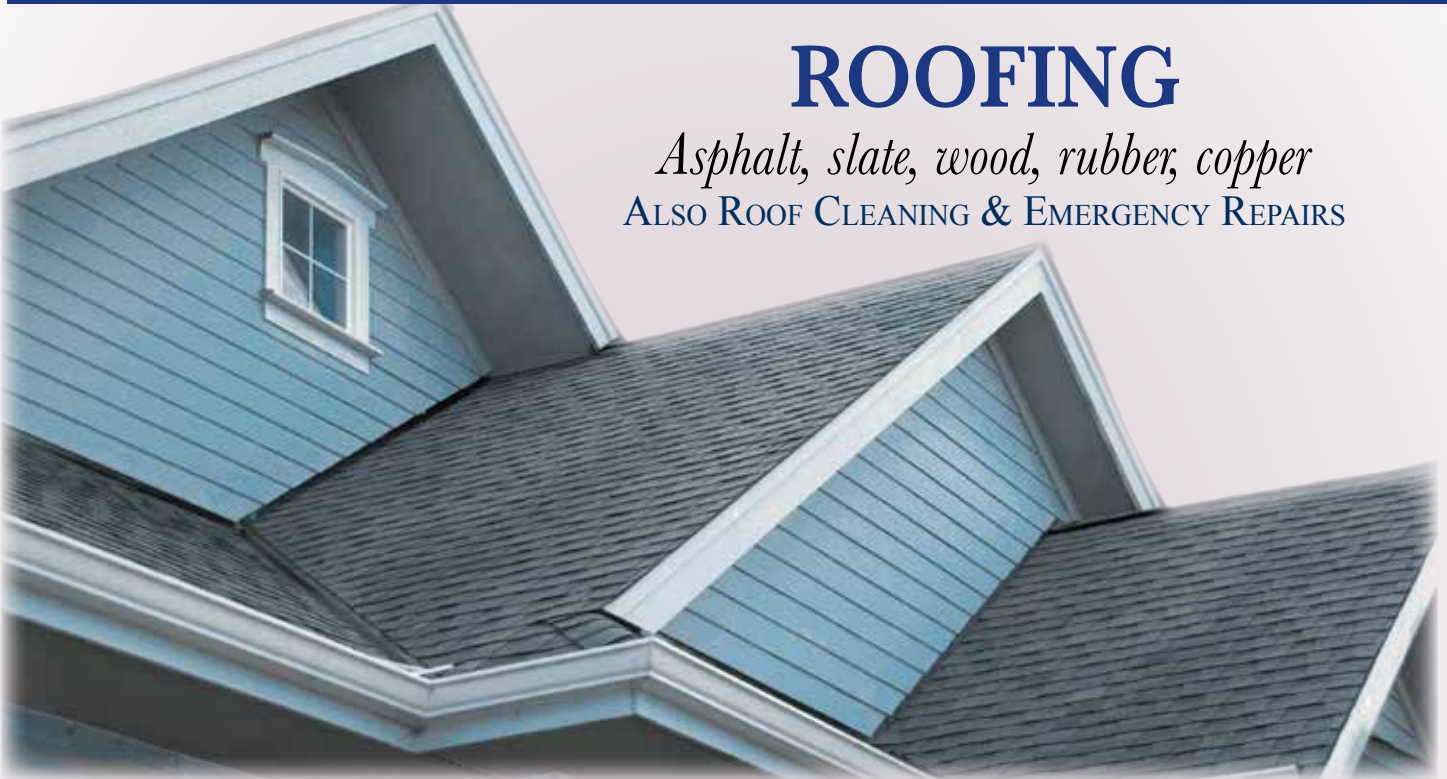
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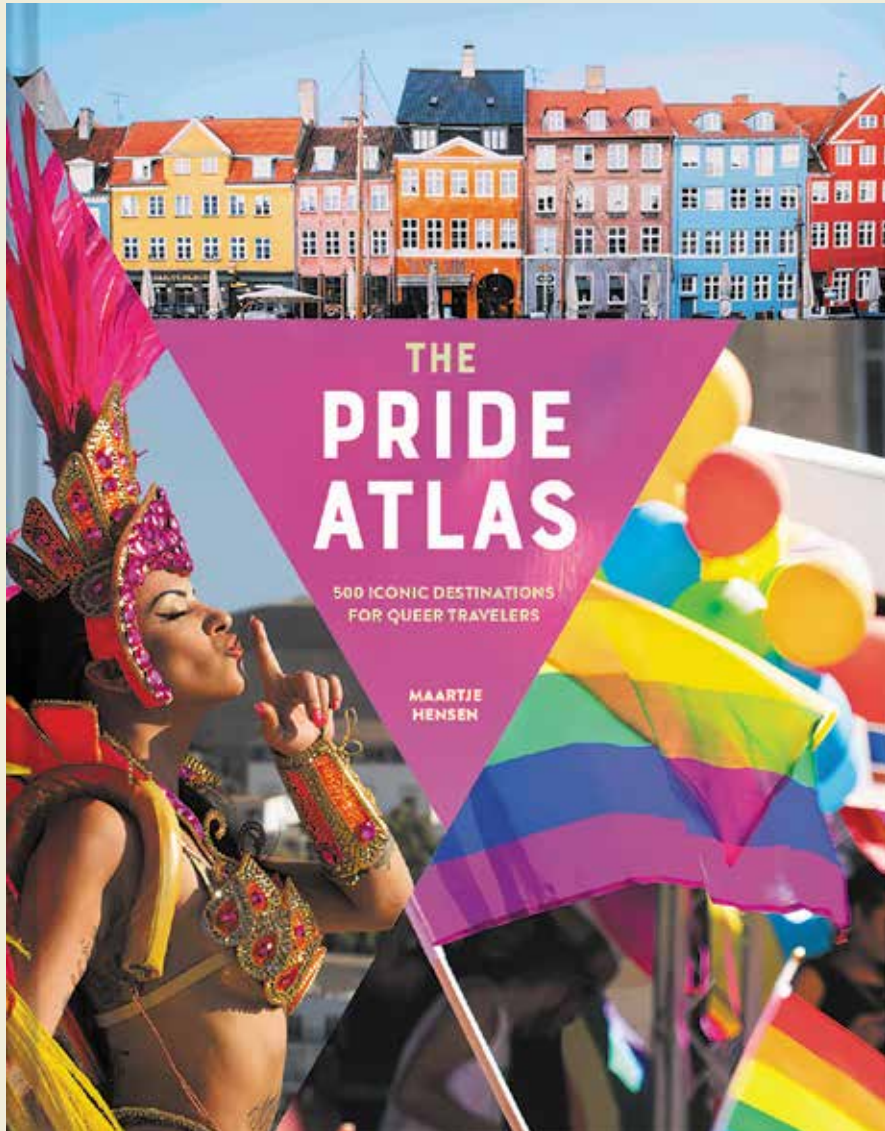


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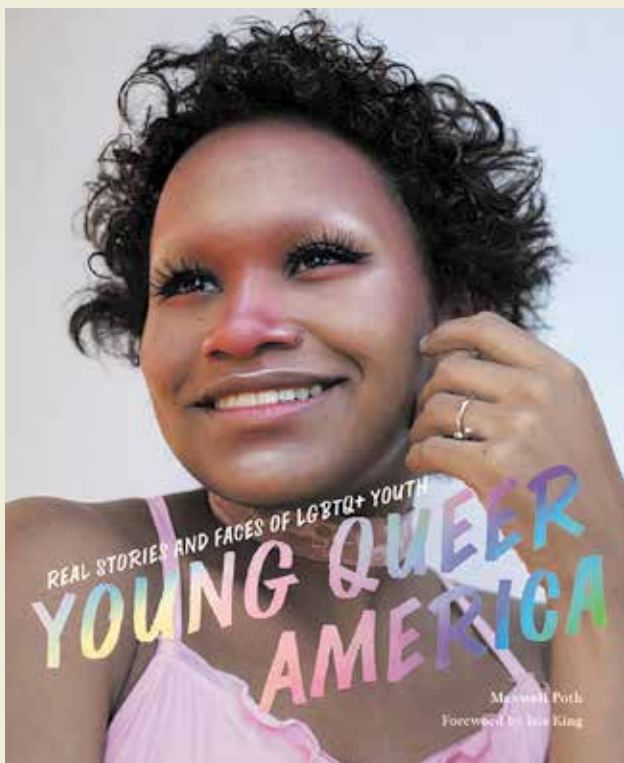


Book Reviews by Terri Schlichenmeyer
PRIDE SPECIAL

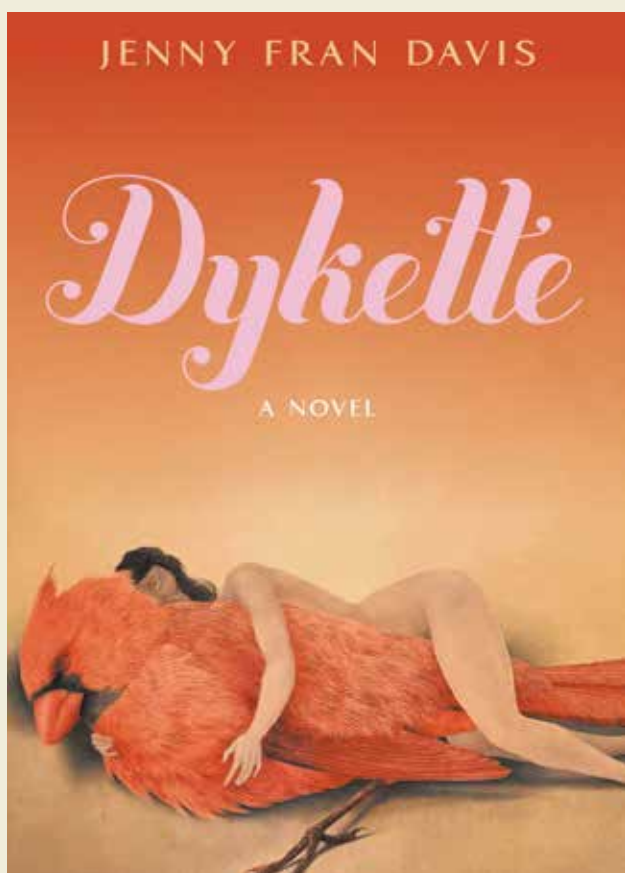
The rainbow flags, the parades and confetti, this time of year makes you want to celebrate Pride Month in any way you can. So why not grab one (or all!) of these great books about LGBTQ+ history and life?

First of all, if you're heading out – out of state, out of town, out on the town, grab **The Pride Atlas** by Maartje Hensen (Chronicle Books, \$30.00). This big, gorgeous book offers 500 unique, special, exciting ideas for travel this month and for the rest of the year.

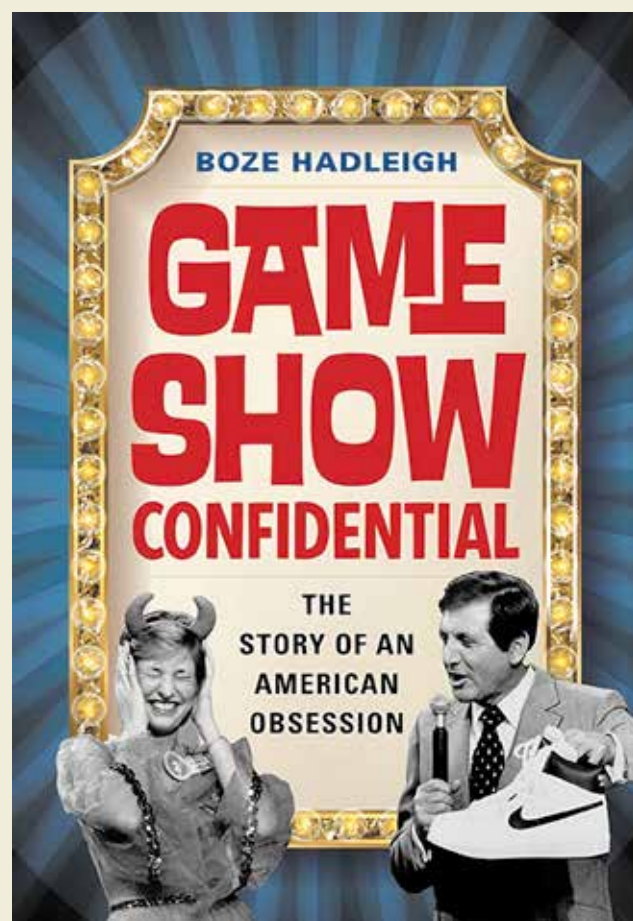
So you love dancing, on sand, a club, or on the street. Fine dining is your thing, and browsing small shops sounds like your idea of a dream. Then this book will open your eyes to places to do all of the above, and more – best of all, many of these fabulous spots are almost right outside your door. If you're making travel plans at all in 2023, this is the book to take with you.



So what's up with the next generation of LGBTQ+ kids? In **Young Queer America: Real Stories and Faces of LGBTQ+ Youth** by Maxwell Poth, foreword by Isis King (Chronicle Books, \$24.95), it's almost like seeing the future.



Or how about this: you can think of this book as a series of mini-biographies, full of advice and positivity but also pain and struggle and lots of open, honest peeks at what it's like to be a gay, lesbian, or trans kid (pre-teen to young adult) in today's world. You'll see their journey (so far) and their hopes which, in a way, makes this book a compass for tomorrow, and don't we all want that now? Sometimes, a little steam is all you want for your Pride Month, and **Dykette** by Jenny Fran Davis (Holt, \$26.99) will be what you want. When twenty-somethings Sasha and Jesse are invited on a mini-vacation with a wealthy lesbian couple in a remote, private area, the plan for the



get-away is obvious – made even more so by the presence of a third couple of women, known to the younger pair. It doesn't go well.

Part romance, part steam, this may be the beach read you want this Pride Month.

And finally, you can't have Pride without paying homage to the gay icons who've gone before you, and in **Game Show Confidential** by Boze Hadleigh (Lyons Press, \$21.95), you'll read about game show hosts

and history, scandals and salesmanship, gaffes and greats including the irrepressible Paul Lynde, who Hadleigh calls “The King of the Zingers.” There’s a wealth of information inside this book, and plenty of nostalgia, making it great enjoyment for anyone who spent summers in front of a rotating fan and a television, playing along in your grandma’s living room.

And, of course, if you still need more books for Pride, we’ve included a couple more, for your perusal. In addition, your favorite librarian or bookseller may have other suggestions. They’ll know what you need to read to stay informed, stay entertained, and have the best Pride you can have, so flag these books now.

***In the Company of Grace: A Veterinarian’s
Memoir of Trauma and Healing*
by Jody Lulich
c.2023, University of Minnesota Press
\$19.95, 232 pages**

You are a product of what your parents do.

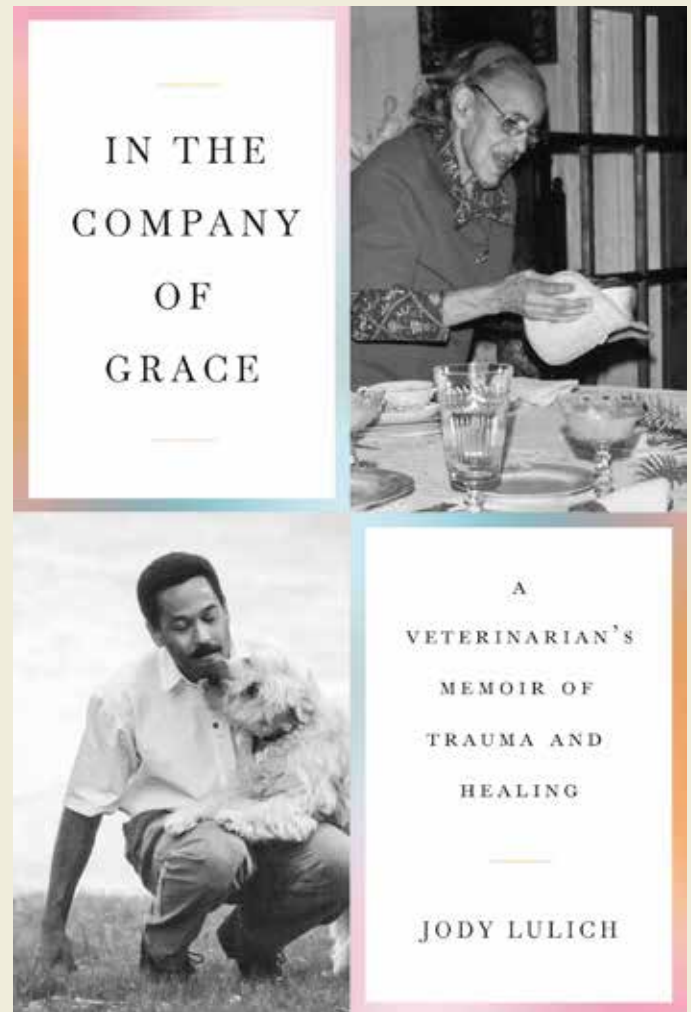
They nurtured you, and you learned to nurture. They yelled, and you discovered that shouting was the way to communicate. From them, you got your sense of humor, your earliest political beliefs, and your initial ideas of right and wrong. You’re a product of what adults around you do – or, as in the new book “In the Company of Grace” by Jody Lulich, what they don’t.

The suicide attempt on New Year’s Eve of 1966 was not Jody Lulich’s mother’s first.

It was, however, the one that took her life, no matter how hard Lulich, who was nine years old at the time, tried to save her. He’d been taking care of her every day after school by then, trying to keep his parents from fighting, trying to keep the violence and vitriol between them at bay, but they were alcoholics with anger issues and he was just a boy.

On the way to his mother’s funeral, his father accidentally hit a stray dog with his car, and kept on driving. It was a kind of metaphor for Lulich’s heartbreak, and he never forgot it.

Through the rest of his childhood, Lulich tried to find the love his father denied him, but it was almost always



absent. At age eleven, Lulich moved out of his father’s home, bouncing between a neighbor’s welcoming house and back; as soon as he was able, he escaped, enrolled in college, and decided on veterinary school as a post-grad at Tuskegee, an HBCU. There he excelled in his career, found support from a mother-figure who loved him, and he grew to accept that he was attracted to men.

But despite his success, the appreciation of his clients and patients, and the accolades that he gathered through the years, Lulich couldn’t seem to shake the feeling that something was wrong in his life. How could he finally accept the love and compassion he deserved?

If you’re the kind of reader who sees the word “veterinarian” in the subtitle of this book and make a beeline for it, there’s one big thing you’ll want to know: “In the Company of Grace” is not filled with animal tales.

There are a few, but they take a big back seat to author Jody Lulich’s story and that of his family, which come in wave after wave of sad memories and deep, lingering want.

These are tales that, even when they're meant to be the slightest bit upbeat, feel like a smack-down, or a stomp on your soul. That makes this a hard read for a good long time – melancholy and hard, but compelling because the tales don't ever become what you think they'll be. Oddly enough, there's triumph here, and exactly what readers will want in the end.

"In the Company of Grace" – so-titled for the woman who accepted Lulich – is not the book to come to when you're feeling sad. Reach for it when you want something meaningful, though. That's what to do.

Pat in the City: My Life of Fashion, Style, and Breaking All the Rules

by Patricia Field

c.2023, Dey Street Books

\$35.00, 272 pages

The shirt's just a little too big.

But that's no problem; you'd rather your shirts be looser anyhow. Pants, they're another matter; they need to be snug all over. You have your own sense of style, and you wear it fabulously. In the new book *Pat in the City* by Patricia Field, read about an icon's journey into clothes, clubs, and couture.

Almost from the time she was born, little Patricia Haig (later, Field) knew that clothing made a statement. She knew it while wearing her cowgirl outfit to play, when she

clothes-shopped with her aunts, and when recalling her father, who was "handsome, sweet, and mild" and who died when she was small. Adoption later changed her surname, but not her love of clothing.

Working in her mother's dry-cleaning "shop" as a kid, Field learned all about fabrics; her aunts' forays into fashion taught her even more. She "always had beautiful clothes," although a pair of men's-style pants discovered in a small boutique in the mid-1950s was life-changing.

Field entered college and landed dual degrees in philosophy and political science, though she says "style came easy to me." By then, she'd turned away from '50s femininity, preferring an androgynous look. She also learned that she preferred women as partners.

One of them was a partner in Field's first business, a small shop near NYU in Manhattan that opened in 1966. In 1971, they opened a larger store, calling it "Patricia Field." Partly due to her contacts with designers, Field sold inventive, trendy, "nouveau glamour" outfits to clubbers who made Studio 54 the "high-octane" place it was then. Field dressed a lot of celebrity clubbers, too, which led her to the ballroom scene, where she became

a House "Father" and a part of voguing history. And then someone suggested to someone else that Field would make a great costumer for an upcoming movie... If you could somehow take two books by a good author and smash them together to make one, that's



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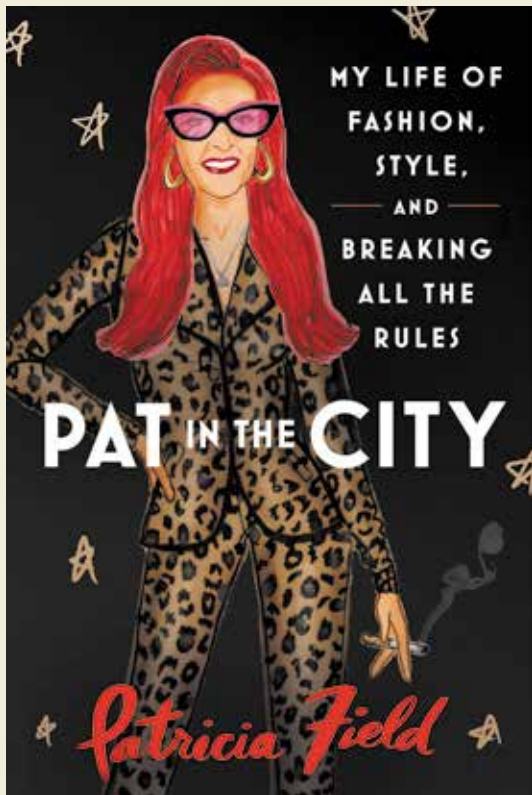
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what you'd have with "Pat in the City." This book is divided almost clean in two, and almost with separate reader-audiences.

In the first part, author Patricia Field shares her biography, her childhood, her formative years, and the awakening of her personal sense of style. Fashionistas won't be able to put those pages aside, nor will anyone who attended any New York City club with any regularity back in the day. This half of Field's book drips with disco lights and ballroom "reads." Celebrities stretch into the second half, as Field writes about being the costumer for *Sex in the City*, the friendships she struck up with its cast, and how the iconic opening scene came to be. This part of the book – likewise glittering with big names and big productions – is for younger readers and Hollywood watchers.

Reading this book is like time-travel to the '70s, and a backstage peek at your favorite show. If you love clothes and people who love fashion, then get *Pat in the City*.

It fits. 🏳️‍🌈

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In early 2015, Tropical Foods opened a brand new 27,000 sf state-of-the-art store just behind the old one. In addition to all the same great items that were carried in the old store, the new location now has a service deli department, a service fish department, and a bakery.

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The Other Two with Drew Taylor and Helene York

THE OTHER TWO + THE CARBONARO EFFECT + AWKWARD!

By Mark Adams

Searching for a watchable LGBTQ+ movie (or binge-able series, if that's your thing) can be a chore. It always brings joy to my face (and other body parts) when I discover a hidden gem amongst the 500 or so channels that we pay a king's ransom for. For example, here is one you may not have noticed, even though it has gotten some press for its third season. *The Other Two* makes me giggle out loud



The Carbonaro Effect with Michael Carbonaro

a lot and it only got better with each successive season that you probably haven't seen. The series, written by a couple of former SNL head writers who wisely moved on to better things, is about a mother, played delightfully by Molly Shannon, the daughter (Helene York) and the son Carey, played by the cutie Drew Taylor. The plot, because that is why we watch these things, is about the three of them having a life-changing experience when the gay young man becomes an overnight internet sensation, hence, the title. Described by Google as "heartwarming, hilarious and satirical," the series hits it out of the ballpark with all three (did I just say "out of the ballpark?"). I would suggest watching *The Other Two* from the beginning — there are 10 episodes per season and, even better, they run an average of less than 25 minutes each, perfect for when you don't have quite enough viewing time at the end of the day for 45 minutes of one of the countless *Law and Order* episodes that seem to air hourly.

I'll bet the ranch that you also haven't seen *The Carbonaro Effect*. See? Told ya. This one stars Michael Carbonaro, hence the title, who is, aside from being gay and ador-

able, a comedian, an actor and a magician. His series was originally on TRU TV. Yup, another one you've got to scan the guide to find, if it's even still in existence. Maybe it's just my twisted sense of humor, and the gimmick does wear off a bit if you binge watch, but I just laugh myself silly...well, sillier, at his antics. Think of it as *Candid Camera* meets David Letterman, as Michael performs baffling tricks on unsuspecting people. Like PT Barnum once said to me personally, "There's one born every minute." We were close. Carbonaro is also on tour for much of the year, appearing in such high spots as a theater in Medford, MA. I would love to see his in-person show. I love magic and was conned into seeing a stage show called "The Naked Magicians" a few years ago. The audience was filled with giggly straight women and a couple of older gay guys (me and a friend). The Naked Magician was, you should know, naked for less than 5 seconds. Be warned. *The Carbonaro Effect* is now on HBO Max, which is now called simply MAX.

Moving on, how many of you have actually watched one episode of *Awkward!!*? It appeared originally on MTV. Yes, THAT MTV. It's still around, though I don't think it's played a "music video" in years. But there I go digressing and ranting again. *Awkward!* (the exclamation point is theirs, not

mine) ran for five series, which, at 13-or-so episodes each, is considerably smaller than what you'll find on broadcast TV. But it is smarter and more well-written than most network TV offerings (CBS comedies, are you listening...), and though aimed at a youthful audience (which, to me, is anyone under 50), has received much adulation from critics. *Awkward!* tells the tale of Jenna, played by a perfect Ashley Rickards, an unpopular high school student who becomes...well, popular, after the student body mistakes an accident as a suicide attempt, and her off-again on-again relationship with another girl. There are a couple of other standout performances, one by Molly Tarlov, as a bitch-you-love-to-hate, and Beau Mirchoff as Jenna's on-again-off-again *Awkward!* is running, last I checked, on Paramount+.

Just time for me to once again mention Andy Cohen, as I occasionally ask myself, why is his show still on the air? And I shall leave you at this point. 🏳️‍🌈

Mark Adams has been a popular contributor to LGBTQ+ media for many years, writing extensively on film and video of interest to the community. You can email him at vidioview@gmail.com with any of your favorites for a future scribbling.



Awkward! featuring Ashley Rickards front, with an ensemble cast





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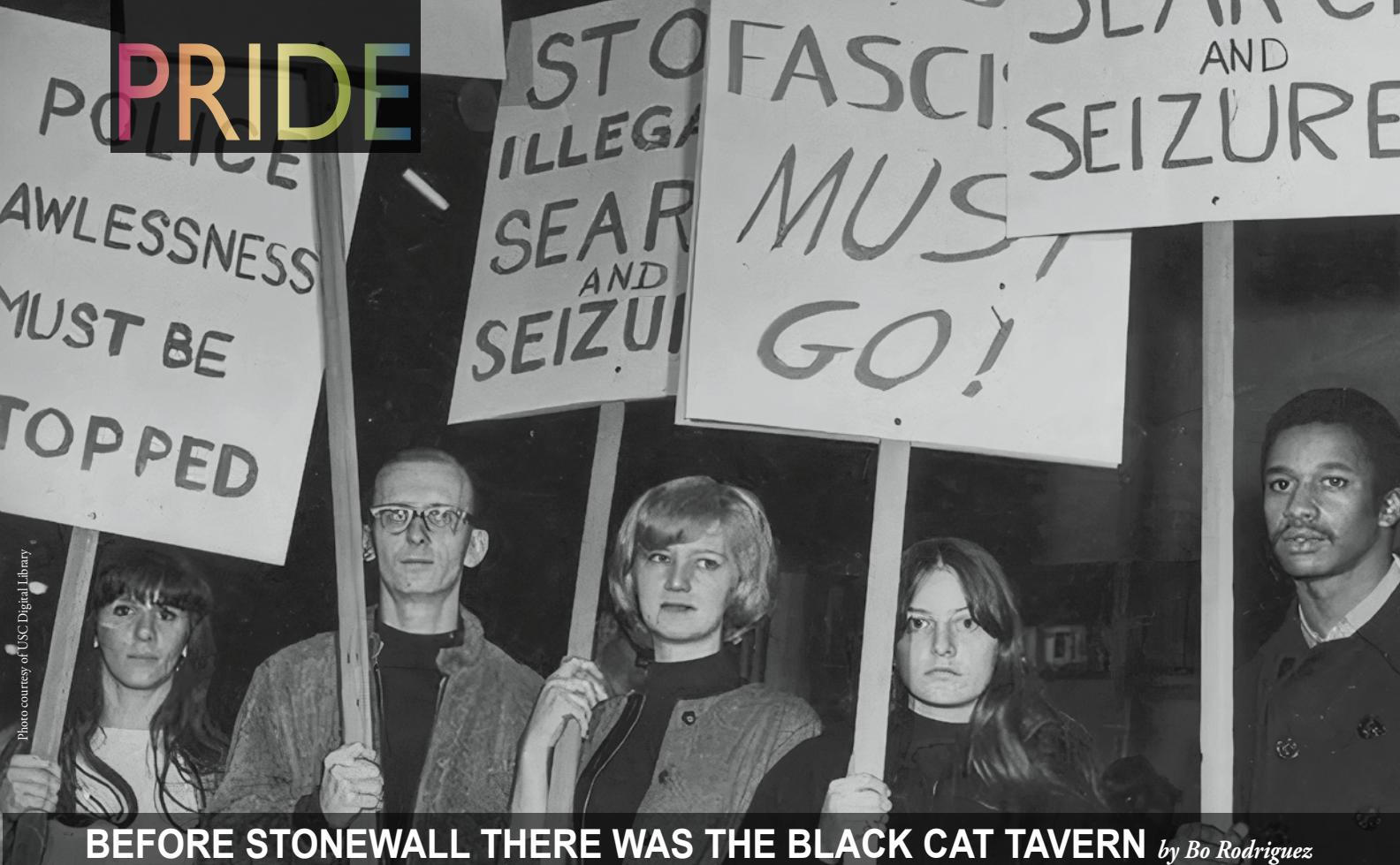
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PRIDE



BEFORE STONEWALL THERE WAS THE BLACK CAT TAVERN *by Bo Rodriguez*

The Black Cat Tavern is an LGBTQ+ bar located in the Silver Lake neighborhood of Los Angeles, California. In 1967, it was the site of one of the first demonstrations in the United States protesting police brutality against LGBTQ+ people, preceding the Stonewall riots by over two years. The clock had just struck midnight at the Black Cat Tavern on Sunset Boulevard on New Year's Day 1967. As singers performed "Auld Lang Syne" in the Silver Lake bar, gay men kissed and embraced, celebrating the new year. Unbeknownst to them, plainclothes Los Angeles police officers had positioned themselves in the crowd that night. They beat patrons and arrested 14 people, who were charged with lewd conduct for same-sex kissing. Two bartenders were beaten unconscious. Two patrons fled to another gay bar, New Faces, but they were followed by police and arrested. The officers mistook the manager, a woman named Lee Roy, for a man (named "Leroy") wearing a dress, and beat her severely.

On Feb. 11, 1967, protesters took a bold step for that era and grabbed their picket signs, publicly protesting the police raid outside the bar — a gay-rights demonstration that pre-dated the monumental Stonewall riots in New York City by two years. Contrary to popular myth, there was no "riot" at the Black Cat, but a civil demonstration of 200 attendees to protest the raids. Demonstrators used "secret phone trees to organize the event" which led to hundreds of people demonstrating and coming to the event. The demonstration was organized by a group called PRIDE (Personal Rights in Defense and Education) — founded by Steve Ginsberg — and the SCCRH (Southern California Council on Religion and Homophile). The protest was met by squadrons of armed policemen. Demonstrators carefully adhered to all laws and ordinances so that the police had no legitimate reasons to make arrests. The event was the first organized public LGBTQ+ protest in Los Angeles, and one of the earliest and largest in the country. This occurred during the governorship of Ronald Reagan, under which a 'law and order' mentality reigned and police brutality was systemic. Two of the men arrested for kissing were later convicted under California Penal Code Section 647 and registered as sex offenders. The men appealed, asserting their right of equal protection under the law, but the U.S. Supreme Court did not accept their case. However, there were fundraising efforts that reached New York and San Francisco for the six convicted patrons — including Benny Baker and Charles Talley.

The raid and subsequent protests inspired publication of The Advocate, which began as a newspaper for the group PRIDE. The January 1967 raid on the Black Cat Tavern and the August 1968 raid on The Patch together inspired the formation of the Metropolitan Community Church (led by Pastor Troy Perry). On November 7, 2008, Black Cat site was declared a Los Angeles Historic-Cultural Monument. 

Our LGBTQ+ Ancestors

Edna St. Vincent Millay's Love for Women

by Jeff Parsons

Best known for her lyrical poetry, Edna St. Vincent Millay was a twentieth-century poet and playwright who became the first woman to receive the Pulitzer Prize for Poetry in 1923. She was also a bisexual. Her anthology of poetry *A Few Figs from Thistles* was controversial for its descriptions of feminism and female sexuality. She was also brave enough to put forward a challenging idea back in the 1900s—that a woman has a right to sexual pleasure, and had no obligation to fidelity.

Millay was born in Rockland, Maine, on February 22, 1892. Her parents were Cora Lounella Buzelle, a nurse, and Henry Tolman Millay, a schoolteacher who would later become a superintendent of schools. Her middle name derives from St. Vincent's Hospital in New York City, where her uncle's life had been saved just before her birth. While Edna was being conceived, her mother was apparently convinced that she was pregnant with a boy. Likewise, throughout her life she was known as Vincent to her family and close friends. During her childhood, she had published poems in the children's magazine *A. Nicholas*. By the age of sixteen, Millay



Edith Wynne Matthison, circa 1915,
Autographed photo courtesy of the Library of Congress



Edna St. Vincent Millay, circa 1920, Photo Vassar Encyclopedia

already had a genuine "sense of vocation" as a poet. Four years after, she entered a lucrative poetry contest at the urging of her mother. The best entries of that contest would be published in a volume. The long poem Millay entered—entitled *Renascence*—won 4th place and not only brought her literary recognition, it gained her a scholarship to attend Vassar College. Encouraged to read the classics at home, she was too rebellious to make a success of formal education, entering Vassar College in 1913 at age 21, later than is typical. Her attendance at Vassar, which she called a "hell-hole", became a strain to her due to its strict nature. Before she attended the college, Millay had a liberal home life. Vassar, on the other hand, expected its students to be refined and live according to their status as young ladies. Millay often wouldn't be formally reprimanded out of respect of her work. At the end of her senior year in 1917, the faculty voted to suspend Millay indefinitely; however, in response to a petition by her peers, she was allowed to graduate.

What isn't widely publicized is that she identified herself as bisexual, having many affairs with both women and men before her marriage. During her years at Vassar, she was said to have begun her exploration into relationships with women, some of which were deeply passionate. This included English actress Edith Wynne Matthison, who was twice her age. While playing the lead in her own *The Princess Marries the Page* at Vassar, Edna St. Vincent Millay was approached by Matthison, who, excited by the performance, came backstage to kiss Millay and invite her to her summer home. Millay felt great passion in the kiss and the two exchanged letters, providing one of her few known straightforward pronouncements

of lesbian love: "You wrote me a beautiful letter,—I wonder if you meant it to be as beautiful as it was.—I think you did; for somehow I know that your feeling for me, however slight it is, is of the nature of love...When you tell me to come, I will come, by the next train, just as I am. This is not meekness, be assured; I do not come naturally by meekness; know that it is a proud surrender to You."

When she got married in 1923, Millay and Eugen Boissevain, her husband, had an agreement that their marriage would be sexually "open." Millay claimed her husband allowed her personal freedom, and that they lived like two bachelors. Certainly, this was highly unusual in the 1920s. But this was indicative Millay's stubborn

individuality and determination to do things on her own way.

Edith Wynne Matthison, was married to playwright, Charles Rann Kennedy appearing to have a similar marriage to Miley and Boissevain's. She was a well known advocate for the rights of women in the early part of the 20th century. Between 1910-1920, she was a member of the National Woman's Party and on the Advisory Council of the Congressional Union for Woman Suffrage.

In 1950, after Millay's death, The New York Times described her as "an idol of the younger generation during the glorious early days of Greenwich Village" and as "one of the greatest American poets of her time. Edith Wynne Matthison died five years later in 1955. 🇧🇷



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Provincetown Carnival *RETURNS*

by Chloe Belle, Photographs of 2022 Carnival Parade by Bo Rodriguez

This year's 45th Annual Carnival will take place August 12-19, 2023. This week-long festival attracts tens of thousands of guests from all over the world to enjoy parties, events, costume contests and the celebrated Carnival parade, where Commercial Street is packed with costume-clad bystanders to the delight of all who attend. Start planning now for 2023's theme: Land of Toys, which should be a fabulous event with costumes rivaling the Monsters, Myths and Legend theme last year. Carnival is the most popular event ever created by the Provincetown Business Guild, bringing in more than 50,000 visitors each year.

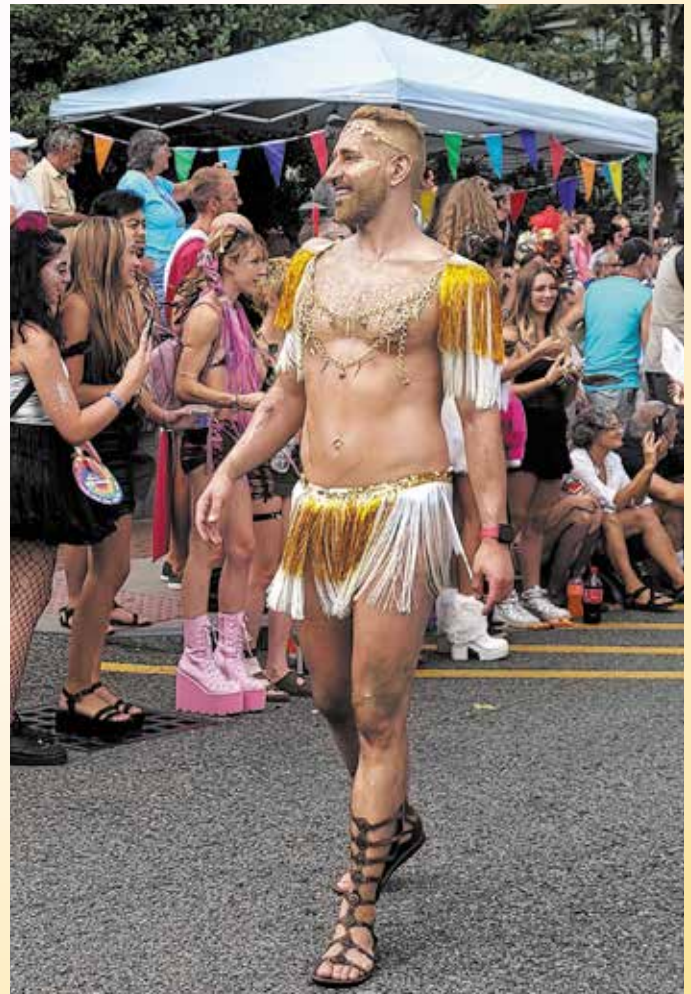
Carnival event has a long history. The nonprofit PBG was founded in 1978, as an alternative to the Chamber of Commerce, which was resisting engaging the gay and lesbian market. Gay and straight business owners formed the PBG with the goal of actively promoting LGBTQ+ tourism, and making Provincetown a world-class destination for our LGBTQ+ community. There is no question that the PBG accomplished that goal.

In the year of its founding, the BPG staged Carnival as its first fundraiser, turning the sleepy third week of August, deep in the pre-Labor Day doldrums, into an event that would attract the community and visitors from far and near. Unlike our cur-





rent, week-long festival, the first Carnival was a one-day event, organized around the theme of A Night In Rio, which ended with a parade then a party. Only a handful of guesthouses built floats for the parade, but it was an auspicious ➡



Provincetown Carnival *RETURNS*



beginning for an event that would become a Provincetown staple.

Last year, after a two-year-long, pandemic-inspired pause, Provincetown's Carnival Parade began on Thursday August 18th, 2022 for its 44th year, with creative floats and fabulous costumes organized around the theme of Monsters, Myths & Legends. Ms. Justin Vivian Bond was selected as the Grand Marshal. Bond has been at the forefront of Trans visibility and activism since the early 1990s, and has appeared on stage (Broadway and Off-Broadway, London's West End), screen (Shortbus, Can You Ever Forgive Me?, Sunset Sto-

ries), television (High Maintenance, Difficult People, The Get Down), nightclub stages (most notably a decades-long residency at Joe's Pub at The Public Theater in NYC), and in concert halls worldwide (Carnegie Hall and The Sydney Opera House to name a few).

As you can see, the community was up to the task creating these wonderful costumes in last year's celebration.

More on the PBG

Today, more than 67% of visitors to Provincetown identify as LGBTQ+ and the PBG is proud of the fact that



Provincetown Carnival *RETURNS*

Provincetown is known as one of the gayest communities in the United States. This didn't just happen. The PBG has been working to brand and market Provincetown as the world's premier LGBTQ+ travel destination for nearly 45 years. One of the ways that the PBG works to promote Provincetown is through the creation of world-class events like Pride in June, and Holly Folly & First Light in December and of course Carnival, which attracts millions of visitors annually. The founders of the PBG wanted to ensure that Provincetown established an everlasting bond with the LGBTQ+ population at large and to make sure the



community knew that there would always be a safe place at the tip of Cape Cod for them to express themselves. Today, the PBG is grateful to our hundreds of member businesses – retailers shops, galleries, lodging establishments, restaurants, attractions, and night clubs – in addition to individual homeowners who support our mission. Sponsors for the 45th Carnival include companies like Grindr, Tito's Handmade Vodka, Provincetown Brewing, and Kraken Rum, in addition to Seamen's Bank and Bay State Cruise Company.



Provincetown Carnival *RETURNS*

A message from the PBG

Your support of Provincetown and our businesses, by making trips here and wisely spending your money in a community that values diversity and inclusion, helps to ensure that this will always be a place where all are welcome for generations to come. See you at the 45th Annual Carnival, August 12-19, 2023! 🏳️‍🌈



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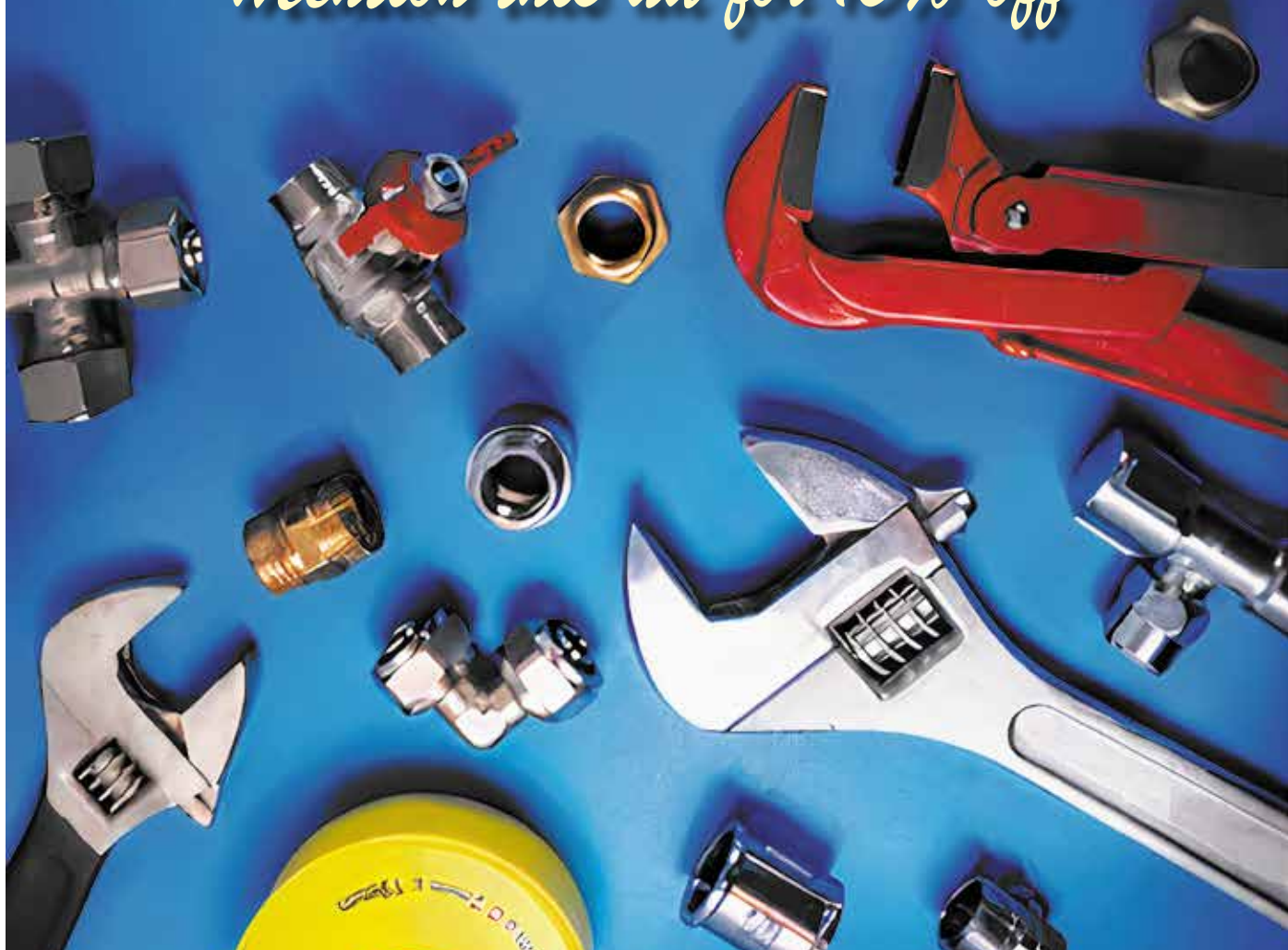
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MOTORCYCLES AS ART + COMMUNITY

J. SHIA

*Changing the Shape of
Boston's Motorcycle World*

by D. Bullen,



Photo courtesy of Madhouse Motors

If you're inside the motorcycle world, you have heard of J. Shia as the builder who's turning motorcycles into works of art, with lines and structures that look like a design hunch you might have had once, but never thought you could build, or like a bike you imagined in a moment of creative whimsy, with antique bolt cutter arms used as a pull starter, a seat cowl made from a Boston drain, an egg slicer used as a rear light, or hand-made exhausts made from scrap parts. If you know the world of motorcycles, you've probably already heard of Madhouse Motors as a welcoming, woman-run heart of the Boston riding community, where anyone can just drop in and talk shop and be treated like family over a cup of coffee.

If you're not in the motorcycle world, you have probably heard of J. Shia through features in places like the New York Times or Forbes, where profiles have highlighted her identity as a woman motorcycle builder, balancing running a business with raising a teen-

age boy. Shia has also been profiled in advocacy circles, where the welcoming atmosphere of her shop is bending a stereotypically narrow motorcycle world toward inclusivity, and where the trials that led her to gain guardianship of her son have translated into public advocacy for reforms to Massachusetts laws that define who can be a parent.

In each of these circles, J. Shia is probably going to be less interested in grabbing the limelight for herself than in keeping high standards for the bikes and creativity in her designs, in maintaining a welcoming atmosphere for her community, and in getting away from it all, and riding in the woods whenever she can.

Getting started

J. Shia says that she “never wanted to be a bike builder.” She wanted to be “a documentary war photographer,” but building and repairing were in her roots. Her family line has Syrian and Lebanese tin-smiths, mechanics and metal workers—they came to the U.S. from Lebanon, and she was born in Boston—and her father launched her into the motorcycle world when he filled the yard with dozens of bike, to fix up and sell.

Shia remembers having her first real toolbox at the age of five, which had “a Dremel tool in it, and I carved my name into everything in sight.” She started riding at eight or nine, on a bike that was too big for her, so her father had to “kick start it for me and lean it up against a tree for me to get on.” (She says, that she had to stop by leaning it against a tree again, but she would “miss all the time and smash my head, or fall off.”)

Shia started out fixing little things like punctures and changing tires in her front yard, and she credits her father and his family with giving her “the inspiration and work ethic” to turn her talent for tinkering into a business. She started fixing bikes when her father said that she could have one if she could fix it, and once she learned enough to get a bike running, she started to “give people my parents’ address and say, ‘come to the yard and

give me 20 bucks and I’ll fix your bike.”

Shia would figure things out on her own, or cold-call experienced mechanics, and her hands-on, open-to-anything approach has turned her into an expert who “knows everything about motorcycles,” in the words of Lucas Merchant, 30, a client and the owner of a Boston real estate management company.

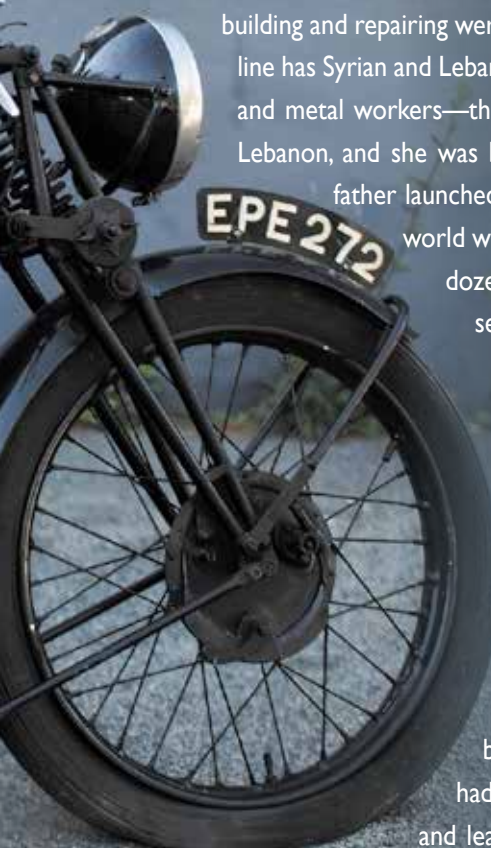
“She’s built the largest vintage motorcycle restoration company in New England, and it’s completely bootstrapped,” Merchant said. “But she literally started in a backyard.”

Working on bikes in the yard—in all seasons, sometimes “in two layers of Carhartts, in the dirt, outside, for most of my teens and 20s”—Shia also put herself through school at the Massachusetts College of Art and Design (MassArt), where she completed a Bachelor’s degree in Fine Arts specializing in photography.

Parenthood

In between taking classes Shia was also raising a baby boy, and she was fighting the courts, DCF, and eventually the child’s own mother, Shia’s ex-girlfriend, to serve as caretaker. As she testified to the Joint Committee on the Massachusetts Judiciary, “When I was 19, my then girlfri our son, a child she and I had agreed to raise together. I was his primary parent”—without any legal rights—“for the first four years of his life until his birth mother ended our relationship and eventually broke off all contact between us. It was heartbreaking to me and to him.” In the years that followed, Shia worked within the system to keep her connection. In the end, she went to the courts, documented her years of parenting, and succeeded in gaining permanent guardianship, but guardianship is not the same as full parental rights, and Shia still has to get permission if she wants to travel out of the state with him, and she still has to reapply for his health insurance every year. As a result, Shia has become an advocate for the Massachusetts Parentage Act (MPA), currently being considered by the state legislature, which would “allow parents to seek de facto parent status—that is equal, legal parentage—with all the rights and responsibilities of parentage, without terminating the birth mother’s rights or excluding her from his life.” according to a GLAD feature.

According to the bill’s sponsors, the MPA “would update the state’s outdated parentage laws to better protect children of LGBTQ+ parents and families formed through assisted reproduction. It clarifies who can be a parent and the many ways to establish parentage; gives married as well as unmarried couples of any gender access to Voluntary Acknowledgments of



MOTORCYCLES AS ART + COMMUNITY

Parentage (VAPs); removes gendered language from parentage statutes; and adds protections for children born through assisted reproduction, including surrogacy.”

While this may not have been a fight Shia was looking for, once it appeared, she was all in. As she said in an interview with the podcast *Fast & Fearless*, “I don’t push the female voice, but when it’s on the table, I’m there to support it.”

Community

The boy is now 12 years old and thriving in Shia’s care, partly because of the community and family Shia has built around motorcycles. Starting in 2009, Shia moved into a 6,000-square-foot motorcycle shop in Roxbury. She called the place Madhouse Motors, in homage to the house she grew up in, which was called “The Madhouse” by locals, for the dozens of vintage bikes scattered in the yard and in the house.

Under Shia’s leadership, Madhouse Motors has become a community-based motorcycle shop that specializes in antique and vintage restoration, custom builds, fabrication and general maintenance. Shia says, “We pride ourselves on our tight knit working style with our customers. We work very closely with them and develop relationships with them. A lot have become

family over the years, and it makes the community that much stronger.”

The space also provides a sense of comfort and safety for patrons felt excluded—because of their gender, identity or sexuality—from the larger biker population.

Shia extends her welcoming approach to the bikes as well as the patrons. She says that she is “not picky about bikes we work on, work on anything, from 1930s to 2018.” Madhouse specializes in antique restorations, but Shia says that “if there’s a motor and gas to blow up, we can do it.”

Shia also says that her heart tends toward anything vintage, specifically pre and mid WW 2 era machines. “I’m most proud of a few restorations we did over the past winter on some bikes from the 1920s and 1930s. I’m a bit of a history geek, so I was super happy when we got the jobs.”

Motorcycles as art

Among the dozens of bikes waiting for restoration or repair, Shia has also made space for her own creative work. In 2017, an invitation to submit a bike for an event called *Motorcycles as Art* sparked the realization that she had never built a bike for herself. “A light bulb went off, and I was like: ‘Wait. I’ve never

J Shia, partner, Gretchen Devine, and 12-year-old son,. Photo Courtesy of The New York Times, Photo by Tony Luong





J displaying some of her customization work, Photo Courtesy of Bike Exif

built a bike for me, in a style that I like. I can do whatever I want,” she said. “And it was this ‘aha’ moment, where I finally, for the first time, after a life of being around motorcycles, designed a bike that was not for a customer.”

In collaboration with a sculptor friend, Michael Ulman, Shia built a 1971 BSA A65 that started with the crank of a huge lever, and this creation was followed by a complex, years-long build, inspired by “Swan Lake,” which resulted in “two bikes that mirror each other,” she says. “The same exact weight, length, height, same year, make, model. But polar opposites.” These bikes were debuted on the Boston Symphony Orchestra stage to Tchaikovsky’s Swan Lake, as the final part of a four-part series “Pareidolia Series” she had been working on since 2017.

Shia has since shown her work at the Scope Art Show during Miami Art Week, and sold bikes to collectors for as much as \$100,000.

Gretchen Divine, Shia’s MassArt classmate and partner of 11 years, met Shia’s son when Shia was in class, and the four-month-old boy was being babysat. She sat down to play him, and then met Shia. “I’ve never met anyone so self-motivated,” she says. “Though I guess it’s not just self-motivated. It’s motivated for her son. She wants to see him have every opportunity that she possibly can.” “She’s always wanted a bike in the Guggenheim,”

Devine adds, “one of her motorcycle sculptures. And I think she’ll make it happen.” If Shia does place a motorcycle in the Guggenheim, she’s likely to humbly portray it as a community effort. “I stay low-key, she says, “because I’d rather be a part of the community than stand out under a limelight. I have to brand myself as it is, and I’d rather only do it as much as necessary to get new customers or projects in the door. I’d rather focus on building momentum for the shop and showing off the projects we do.” This sense of motivation is currently taking shape as a plan to build out a coffee shop at Madhouse, and to host the annual motorcycle show in Cambridge, called Wild Rabbit, which drew about 2,000 people last year.

Advocacy and mission

While Shia’s efforts founding and leading a woman-run motorcycle shop are changing the way people think about the motorcycle community in Boston, but in an interview with Fast & Fearless, Shia said that “gender was never part of my work, not with my family, not with riding. I’ve never done this because of my gender, I’ve done this because it’s my job. I’m a mechanic, that’s what I am. Now [me being a girl] has turned into something that’s changed the format of the motorcycle world, because more girls are getting into it, which is awesome. And

continued on page 60

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JAR

Joel Arthur Rosenthal

JEWELRY DESIGNER

By Nicholas McCarty

Openly gay, Joel Arthur Rosenthal is an American jeweller who works in Paris where he founded the fine jewelry firm JAR. He has been called a fantasy jeweler to the moneyed and famous: designer Diane von Furstenberg referred to him as the “Fabergé of our time.” He is private: he does not advertise either his outrageously luxe, decadent jewels or his perfumes.

Born in 1943 in the Bronx, Joel Arthur Rosenthal is the only son of a postman and



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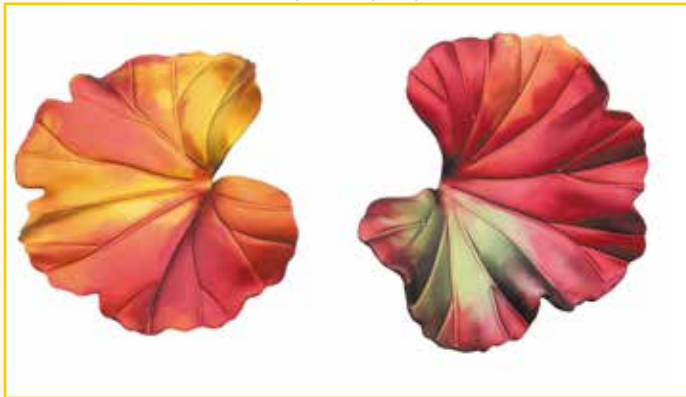
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a teacher in biology. He spent a semester at City College of New York studying linguistics; he speaks French, Italian, English and Yiddish. He then transferred to Harvard University, where he studied art history and philosophy, graduating in 1966. He then moved to Paris where he worked as a screenwriter, then as a needle-stitcher, opening a small shop. He experimented with unusually colored yarn. Its clientele included designers from Hermès and Valentino. Rosenthal one day was asked if he could design a mount for a gemstone. That sent his career in a new direction. After a short stint as a salesman in the New York store of Bulgari, he returned to Paris in 1977 and began designing pieces there from affordable



Large Geranium JAR, Earrings

materials, such as coral, moonstone and minute colored diamond. Quick success led the self-taught Rosenthal to open a non-descript salon at 7 Place Vendôme, where he still hosts his loyal clients. His company, JAR, has no shop window or sign on the street. The entry is made on the sponsorship of a known customer and for persons whose name excludes any ambiguity. Each piece is unique, created for a specific client; his yearly output is a scant 70-80 pieces.[4] He takes inspiration from the fauna and flora for his creations, mixing references from the past with current techniques of jewelry. What Rosenthal has been doing since 1977 is setting gems in pavé arrangements as fine as needlepoint stitches, frequently amplifying the stones' colors by mounting them in a blackened alloy. In 1994, JAR made a Parrot Tulip bangle of gold, with diamond. In 2013 Joan Juliet Buck from Harpers Bazaar wrote about an early meeting with Rosenthal, "I met Joel Arthur Rosenthal in a cavern under Paris,

which is a fitting place to meet a man who turns metal and stone into dreams. It was at a dinner in 1994 in a medieval cellar. He was pale, intense, magnetic, and brilliant. I took him for an insightful professor of comparative everything. Later I was told that he made the most exquisite jewelry in the world under his initials: JAR. It wasn't until a few weeks later that I began to glimpse the secret treasures of JAR on the ladies of Paris, and I thought I was dreaming. Were those really eggshells broken in half and lined in gems hanging from the ears of Madame D.? The venerable J. de L. had an enormous poppy made of innumerable reddish and orange stones set in dark metal. The design followed no stylized gimmick; it was a fading flower with meandering perverse petals that drooped and folded upon themselves. The stone of an engagement ring was held in place by ribbons of white gold almost as thin as hairs, set with tiny diamonds. A scatter of violets across a shoulder was in fact a set of brooches, nine in all, I think. Each jewel from JAR is made only for its owner. There is no "collection," no "line," no easily reproducible template. Joel Rosenthal starts from scratch each time, and the work can take years. His work has magic in it. time, and the work can take years. Each thing he makes is a world unto itself, like a poem. His work has magic in it."

In 2002 London's The Gilbert Collection at Somerset House staged an exhibition of 400 of his works which were displayed in near darkness with visitors using torches to view the jewels one at a time. A decade later in 2013 the New York Metropolitan Museum of Art hosted a retrospective of his works with 145 clients loaning hundreds of jewels between them. Rosenthal is very particular about who he sells to and all new clients are introduced to him by existing ones. He never advertises, rarely gives interviews and has created an air of mystery and exclusivity around himself and his work. He says this is the result of being extremely private, either way it has only added to the public's fascination with both the man and his jewellery. When pieces come up at auction they consistently fetch hammer prices far in excess of their estimates and he remains one of the most highly regarded and sought after of contemporary jewellers. 



Diamond and Emerald, JAR brooch

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Reinventing Traditions for our LGBTQ+ Weddings **Creatively** by Chloe Belle



Wedding at Moxy Chattanooga, Photo by OK Crowe

LGBTQ+ weddings can sometimes feel tricky to plan because they don't have a script dictated by tradition. While there is uncertainty in this—how can you tell who proposes to whom?—it also means that you can do away with stuffy conventional wedding roles and customs and make the day truly your own: Both brides can walk down the aisle. The grooms can carry flowers — you get to decide the rules!

We spoke with several experts in the field and a number of LGBTQ+ couples, to see how LGBTQ+ couples have reinvented wedding traditions to suit their needs and relationships.

1. WHO PROPOSES TO WHOM?

The first rule for LGBTQ+ couples who are confused about their roles is to listen to your partner and communicate, so you make sure you don't ruin their moment, or they don't ruin

yours. If you'd like to ask, or would like to be asked, say so.

In the heteronormative script, the groom asks the bride's father for permission to propose, before going down on one knee and offering a ring. Without this tradition, though, who's to say it has to be like that?

Rachel Capper, co-founder of LGBT Fit, says that her partner, Isabella Beni, "proposed to me on our anniversary in Richmond, which is a very special place for us as we'd spent a lot of time there when we were first dating."

"We had agreed to only do cards for our anniversary. She picked a bench she was happy with and made me turn around under the guise of surprising me with her card. I turned around and she was there with a ring in her hand, proposing!

"She was still sitting on the bench so I told her 'you'll need to

get down on one knee and ask me again.’ Then I said yes and it was the best moment.”

No one says that anyone has to go down on one knee. There is not even any requirement to have a ring. Some couples mark the occasion with engagement gifts that have sentimental value, such as engagement watches, while other couples write a song or a poem, or buy a tree to nurture in their garden.

2. DON'T BE CONFINED BY WEDDING PARTY LABELS

In planning an LGBTQ+ wedding, gender is only one factor in determining roles. As you plan to gather your guests and families for the celebration, be sure to clarify people's roles, so they know how they can help you fulfill your vision for the day—and so they can stay out of the way of other people who hold complementary roles!

“For me, these are three of my best girl friends and my sister. For Isabella, it's her best guy mate and three of her best girl friends,” says Rachel.

“We're putting the bridesmaids in the same dress, but they're multi-way dresses so everyone can make it their own and wear something they feel comfortable in.”

Whether you call them your wedding party or your ‘I do crew,’ the people who'll be there on your big day will have a lot of responsibilities. Here is a list of just some of the things you'll need someone in your wedding party to look after:

- Organize bachelor/bachelorette parties

- Act as a sounding board for ideas

- Attend fittings

- Help with hands-on tasks such as addressing wedding invitations, setting up the day before, and transporting or directing guests

- Witness your signatures on the wedding certificate

- Greet and guide guests to their seats in the ceremony

- Ensure all suppliers/items are in place

- Hold the rings (if you're having them)

- Get ready with the couple

It's up to you and your people to decide who you takes what role in your wedding and what each role is called. Some couples have assigned friends to be their “something blue,” a nod to the old advice that a happy marriage requires “something old, something new, something borrowed, something blue.”

3. WHAT DO YOU WEAR?

Dress code is one of the wedding traditions that doesn't necessarily make sense anymore. What to wear on your wedding day is entirely up to you. No need for this suit or that dress. Be

yourself, be comfortable, and wear what makes you shine!

Isabella and Rachael chose their wedding day outfits based on what made them feel good. Rachael says: “When we told people we were engaged, we got asked who's wearing the suit? I turned back to them and said: ‘Who do you think's wearing the suit?’ That one left them confused!

Without the heteronormative wedding traditions, there's no need for one bride to wear a women's wedding suit and one bride to wear a dress if that's not your vibe. If you've spent your life ditching gender standards, why conform to them in your wedding?

“Wear what you're comfortable in and what you feel good in! Whether that's both in suits, in jumpsuits, separates or dresses. I wear a lot of dresses so I felt very comfortable in a wedding dress, though I like a very simple style so never wanted anything too grand or fussy. Isabella thought she'd feel better in separates – like a crop top and flowy trousers or a skirt – but ended up finding a dress that she feels amazing in.”

Of course, if you already have traditions you want



Dog Elopement, Photo by Hip Photography



Wedding in Houston, TX, Photos by Ama by Aisha

to keep—such as the surprise element of revealing your outfit—make it work for you! “We know the other one is wearing a dress, but that’s all we know! It’ll be a surprise for the day,” explains Rachael.

Lots of couples pick their outfits together to avoid clashing colors. Often that means there’s no need for a “big reveal.” Also, there isn’t any reason you can’t spend the night before the wedding together. Many couples opt to get ready together, which makes for some great “getting ready” photos! However, if you still want to have a big reveal, there’s no reason not to! Bear in mind that if you get ready separately, you’ll probably need a second photographer for your getting ready photos.

4. WHO WALKS DOWN THE AISLE?

In a traditional ceremony, the bride is walked down the aisle and “given away” by her father—which feels super outdated! Who says it needs to be your father? Enlist your best friend, or a very close auntie, or your mum, to hand you to the one you love! You could even walk down the aisle together if you want, which is an incredibly romantic gesture and a glorious moment to capture on camera. It really is up to you! There are so many ways to make this moment your own.

If the idea of all that attention makes you nauseous, ditch the aisle altogether, in favor of a ceremony circle, where guests stand in a circle and leave space for the couple to join. Or else you can start at the front of the ceremony space and then have the guests enter after you. Mingle with the crowd if they’re not in seats and slip your way to the front, or—this is a great idea for an outside space—lead the guests in a processional behind

you, so they find their seats as you arrive at the front.

Rachel and Isabella took yet another different approach: “We’ve talked this one through as we were going to meet at the bottom of the aisle and walk up together, but then we decided to go separately as Isabella’s dad had been unwell and it meant a lot to her for him to walk her up the aisle. Isabella will go first and wait for me at the top, I’ll then walk up afterwards.”

5. WHERE DO YOU STAND AT THE CEREMONY?

The ancient wedding tradition of the bride and groom standing in certain places dates back to a time when grooms needed their right hand free to defend their bride from other suitors—but we’re hoping no sword fights break out at weddings these days...

Since you don’t need to follow this traditional role, stand on whichever side you feel most comfortable on. Just discuss it beforehand, so you don’t have to do the awkward little dance around each other at the altar. Your attendants of honor can stand to the side, or take seats on the front row, to keep the suitors at bay...

6. WHO HOLDS THE FLOWERS?

The answer is, anyone! However you identify, there’s no rule against carrying bouquets—nor is there anything to prevent you from getting rid of them altogether!

7. WHAT ABOUT THE OFFICIANT?

In 2015, the U.S. Supreme Court stated in *Obergefell v. Hodges* that the 14th Amendment requires all U.S. states to recognize same-sex marriages, and the 2022 Respect for Marriage Act clarified that all states must recognize interracial or same-sex marriages performed in another domestic or foreign jurisdictions. It also requires all territories



Wedding at the Zoo, Photos by Dunn Photography



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Multicolored mural included the phrase "To Be Free." Photo by Florent Vidal Photography

and possessions of the United States to recognize marriages performed elsewhere, so it you might want to include a gesture to the activists and officials who defended the right to marry, at some point in your ceremony, since it definitely has not always been this way.

Wherever you are, find an LGBTQ+ friendly officiant who will know how to steer the ceremony around any of the casual homophobia that still lingers in some corners of people's families. Why let someone officiate at your wedding, only to let their stray comments undermine the day?

8. WHAT SYMBOLIC ACTS SHOULD WE INCLUDE?

A lot of the cultural assumptions that surround weddings (taking the husband's last name, the work of the wedding falling on the shoulders of the woman) were designed to reinforce very particular power and gender dynamics. But this does not mean that you have to strip the wedding down to the bare minimum. Weddings are about celebrating a new love in the world – why not invent your own ceremonial acts, to represent your love and unity in ways your guests will remember forever? Some ideas include:

Handfasting: This pagan ritual works well at modern ceremonies: The couple crosses their hands and the celebrants, guests, or family members tie colored ribbons round their hands to represent their joining together.

Unity candle ceremony: Two candles representing each of you are lit at the start of the ceremony, and later used to light a

larger central candle.

Ring warming: Pass the rings between all your guests, so they can speak or send their wishes for your future over the rings. When the time comes to exchange them, they're imbued with the love and affection of all your family and friends.

Jumping the broom: This ancient ritual represents sweeping away the old and welcoming the new: decorate a broom, lay it on the floor and jump over it together.

A unity ceremony: Both of you have a container of different colored sand. You pour them together into a vase to symbolize your two lives and personalities fusing together. Display the vase at home after as a wedding keepsake!

9. VOWS?

While a civil religious wedding ceremony requires you to say standard legal declarations and contracting words, you can still be creative. Just discuss your vows with your officiant first to find out where you're allowed to make additions or changes to the standard language.

However you proceed, make sure your vows explain to your congregants why your partner is special, why you want to marry them, and take this chance to express your love with no limits or boundaries. Discover more about writing your own wedding vows here.

10. TABLE PLAN AT AN LGBTQ+ WEDDING?

Traditionally, seating arrangements alternate between male and female guests, but those rules don't apply here.





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REINVENTING TRADITIONS

Leading etiquette coach William Hanson says: “For same sex weddings the rule book can be adjusted or in some cases forgotten – so long as the wedding day itself is respectful, harmonious and civilized. The male-female seating plan is one traditional rule that obviously has to get abandoned as the newly married same sex couple will be seated next to each other on the ‘top’ table.”

Some couples have done away with the top table, to have a ‘sweet-heart’ table instead, just for them, or no top table at all. Round tables remove any hierarchy and make it easier to speak to guests. Another alternative that avoids the traditional top table is to place the couple at the head of one table together, and to give each set of parents the head of other tables, and the same with your honor attendants. This helps everyone circulate with the attendees and avoids the risk of offending anyone with your seating plan.

11. WHO GIVES A SPEECH?

By now, you should already hear the advice: Ditch tradition if you want to, and organize the speeches however you like! Only try to keep the toasts and speeches short and sweet, so your guests don’t feel like they’re being held captive by long-winded relatives and storytellers. In this area as in the others, a little advanced planning and communication will go a long way to make sure that each piece of the wedding flows into the next, and adds up to a celebration of your love and commitment.

How about...

Get both fathers/mothers to give a speech

You and your partner are the stars of the show, so why not give a speech together?

Groom speech, best man speech? Pfui! If of your good friends is an excellent public speaker and can hold a drink, they shouldn’t need to be in the wedding party to make their contribution to the day. Your mates don’t want to do a speech? Get them to do a video - we’re sure there’s lots of funny content from your nights out together! Make a book of tributes: Sites like Fromabirdie.com will send your guests a link in advance, and solicit their contributions, then send you a beautiful printed book with everything they have written. This can make

for an emotional surprise, and allow distant relatives to contribute, if they can’t be there in person.


Get your master of ceremonies to walk around with a microphone interview style! You never know who wants to go on stage, or what endearing stories might emerge.

And when it comes to timings... you don’t need to have them after dinner. Why not get people laughing at the drinks reception for a less formal feel? (and maybe get people talking before they have drunk too much...)

In the same way, feel free to innovate the first dance, and who dances with whom. Remember that weddings are a combination of a celebration of your love, and a way to integrate your union with your families and friends, so diplomatic inclusions and dances can go a long way toward introducing your people to each other, and strengthening the community around your marriage.

12. WHO PAYS FOR THE WEDDING?

According to tradition, the bride’s parents pay for the wedding, or at least a significant portion of it, but more and more couples are paying for their wedding themselves, or else both sets of parents are chipping in equally. Money always involves delicate conversations. Don’t make any assumptions about who will contribute or lend you money, and be aware that whoever contributes may also want a say in the wedding planning. If you want complete control over your day, it might make sense to fund the festivities yourselves.

One same sex couple said that: “Our biggest issue was deciding who to invite. We respectfully asked that plus ones be reserved to significant others or family; no strangers allowed! wayed on budget, and we expected to pay for the wedding solely from our pockets. “We find that it is easy to get lost sometimes in heterosexual weddings, since getting married has always been accepted as a norm. As a same-sex couple planning our wedding, we didn’t take that for granted.” Remember, your wedding should be a celebration of your relationship and your love for each other —you can follow as many or as few traditions as you like! 

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LGBTQ+ COUPLES, CAR BUYING GUIDE



by John Axelrod, photos by Dreamtime

Car buying can be an incredibly exciting AND stressful experience. It's a huge investment and a costly one at that. The dealership itself can be overwhelming when sales tactics feel pushy, and you don't understand the terminology being thrown around. Now add in the general discomfort and judgment members of the LGBTQ+ community already encounter daily, and what should be an exciting experience can quickly take a negative turn. Fortunately, we've compiled some tips and insights to help alleviate some of the frustration and discomfort that comes from car shopping as an LGBTQ+ couple.



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Al Brodeur's Auto Body

Jeff Parsons with Molly Brodeur-Nesbitt

Al Brodeur Auto Body, Inc. has been awarded the Best Small Business by the Marlborough Regional Chamber of Commerce for our work throughout the pandemic in supporting the community at large. Donating over \$45 thousand in gas cards, restaurant gift cards, grocery gift cards, detailing gift certificates, and more to the first responders, nurses, truckers, school teachers, grocery store and retail workers in the region who worked tirelessly throughout the pandemic to keep the community moving. The company also works very closely with the Marlborough Rotary Club, Sweats for Vets, the National Alliance of Mental Illness (NAMI), Fresh Start Furniture Bank and many other civic organizations in an around the region.



Molly Brodeur-Nesbitt
President and Owner

What is your title and your role at Al Brodeur's Auto Body?

Molly Brodeur-Nesbitt, President and Owner of Al Brodeur's Auto Body, Inc.

How long has Al Brodeur's Auto Body been in business and what is the history of the company?

We have been in business for 52 years. My father, Al Brodeur, opened the shop in 1970 when he was 19 years old. Al Brodeur's Auto Body is family owned and operated and we are proud to have achieved I-CAR Gold Class status and numerous manufacturer certifications in collision repair.

Do you have many LGBTQ+ clients?

We are proud to have many LGBTQ+ clients. Most recently, a client of ours transitioned and it was so wonderful to witness them coming into their own. The LGBTQ+ community holds a special place in my heart and we are here to serve all!

What are your services?

Manufacturer certified collision repair, mechanical repair, auto detailing and towing.

What makes Al Brodeur's Auto Body different from other businesses?

We are hyper-focused on our customers, providing a stress-free repair experience. We handle all aspects of the repair and claim process, including negotiating with insurance companies to ensure safe and proper repairs. We offer rental vehicles in partnership with Enterprise Rental.

We have heard that you have a high level of client satisfaction, what's your secret?

I think our secret starts with an employee focused culture – we value each member of our team and have worked very hard to create an inclusive, supportive environment, which translates over to how we treat our customers. Being involved in an accident can be traumatic, it disrupts our lives and it's not something most folks experience often. We work very hard to ease the distress.

What makes you proud of being a part of Al Brodeur's Auto Body?

I am proud of our 52 years of providing exceptional service and proper repairs, along with our outstanding team! We are also part of an elite group of collision repairers that have achieved I-CAR Gold Class status and Manufacturer certifications, with our technicians all receiving the Platinum Training Designation. Less than 10% of collision repairers nationwide fall into this category!

What is the biggest challenge you face in the auto body business?

The biggest challenge we face is negotiating with insurance companies to repair vehicles in accordance with manufacturer recommendations. Here in Massachusetts, we receive the lowest labor rate reimbursement from insurers for repairing vehicles nationwide. This suppressed rate, which has been in place for close to 30 years, does a great disservice to the motoring public as it puts undue pressure on repairers and leads to unsafe repairs, performed by untrained technicians. As an industry, we've been lobbying diligently to get this disparity addressed. 🇺🇸



DO YOUR RESEARCH

First, you've got to do your research. This is true no matter what your orientation or relationship status is. You always want to walk into a dealership with a general understanding of what you want in a vehicle, as well as what you're willing to pay for. If you still haven't settled on a dealership just yet, don't forget that you can utilize BestRide's search engine to help guide you to a local dealer you can trust.

Once you've narrowed down your desired budget and what features matter most to you in a vehicle, you can start filtering through dealerships and OEMs that fit your criteria and find the ones that have the added benefit of being LGBTQ+ friendly.

Here are a few notable companies to help kickstart your research:

Subaru
Mazda
Nissan
Volkswagen
Toyota

Bear in mind that these are not the **ONLY** manufacturers with progressive policies regarding LGBTQ+ people. A lot of brands are aiming to be more inclusive with their culture and policies with varying degrees of success. These companies have just been more proactive and vocal in their support of the community. For instance, Toyota and Subaru most recently earned 100% ratings on the Human Rights Campaign Foundation's Corporate Equality Index (CEI). The CEI is the na-

tional benchmarking tool on corporate policies, practices, and benefits pertinent to LGBTQ+ employees.

FIND YOUR DEALERSHIP(S)

Once you've done your research and you're confident in your decisions, it's time to head to the dealership. If this is your very **FIRST** dealership experience, check out our First Time Buyer's Guide for tips to navigate the unique hurdles of that situation. Even if you've narrowed your search down to a particular OEM and dealership, it's always good to have a backup list in mind. You may not find the deal or model you want in a single day, but that's no reason to feel discouraged. Car buying often takes a bit of legwork and perseverance to find your perfect ride. Reading dealership reviews from previous car shoppers will give you an informed idea of which shops will be worth your time **AND** your money.

BRING BACKUP

It's more than likely that you and your partner would opt to go through the shopping process together. But if neither of you know much about the process, we recommend bringing a knowledgeable friend with you. If they have been through the dealership and car buying process before, that's a huge plus. It can also be comforting having someone there who is familiar with your relationship and can be a buffer in otherwise uncomfortable situations.





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true for ANY given dealership experience, regardless of orientation. However, as a member of the LGBTQ+ community myself, I know very well that there is a “regular” level of social awkwardness, and then there is the discomfort that comes from a nearly tangible intolerance.

Buying a new car with your partner is both an exhilarating and challenging ordeal. For members of the LGBTQ+ community, there is an added difficulty of buying their vehicle from an ethical company that aligns with and supports their needs. Just always remember, for every disappointing dealership experience you might have, there is sure to be an establishment out there that has your best ride on the lot AND your best interests in mind.

REMEMBER YOU CAN WALK AWAY

If there is a single note you take away from this shopping guide, let it be this: there is ALWAYS another dealership. Never sacrifice your comfort, self-respect, or ethics for a vehicle that can almost certainly be found in a different dealership. We guarantee there's a dealer out there that will treat you with respect while you shop for your car. After your purchase, it's helpful to leave a review for future shoppers. This will be highly beneficial to other members of the LGBTQ+ community that are heading out on their own daunting journey to buy a car. It'll also let the dealer know if they did a good job or if there's room for improvement.

ENJOY YOUR NEW RIDE

Even if the dealership and car manufacturer you chose was on your list of LGBTQ+ friendly companies, individual workers that you interact with may vary from somewhat awkward to outright rude. It could be argued that this is



With these tips, LGBTQ+ couples can find the vehicle they want, and the smooth, enjoyable dealership experience they deserve. If all else fails don't forget the several internet car purchasing companies that can deliver your car right to your front door. 🏳️‍🌈



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MOTORCYCLES AS ART + COMMUNITY

continued from page 37

it's not just girls doing it.

"My whole team, they don't give a crap about my gender, they're here for the bikes. That kind of subtle support is a huge statement. Real good guys stand behind it as well. Now the guys who aren't supportive are the ones who are looked at sideways."

As Shia said in a separate interview with VC London, "so often, we see people not publicly supporting diversity or inclusion in the motorcycle world because they're worried about negative feedback or repercussions. Frankly, I feel like voicing your opinion in a way that isn't too abrasive can educate others, and that's a vital part of change."

Asked for words of wisdom, she offers a time-honored formula: "Do the work because you love it, share your knowledge, and keep the competition to a minimum." "We're not in it for the competition," she elaborates, "we just want to make and fix bikes so that people can enjoy them. The shop is a place where my friends and family can hang out and enjoy each other's company. The Madhouse outfit is a 'family' business, but most of the people who make the whole thing work aren't related by blood." And when all the responsibility and work gets heavy, Shia follows a long line of Americans who get on a bike, and ride off into nature to get away. "I prefer the trails," she says. "I spend as much of my free time out in the woods as possible. It's just the place I feel the best." She takes her son with her—he's now 12—and sounds relieved when she says that he has expressed a preference for becoming a teacher or a veterinarian, taking the family tendency toward tinkering into a whole new field. 🇺🇸

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