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## Leadership in many shapes



**EDITORIAL**  
**NATASHA BARSOTTI**

Leadership, both obvious and subtle, surged to the forefront as 2013 ticked down.

At least twice, US President Barack Obama repeated his assertion that we will never again see someone of Nelson Mandela's like. Glorified in such terms, Mandela, who died Dec 5 at 95, is positioned out of our reach, an impossibly hard act to follow.

But, as Father Sebastian Rossouw observed during one of the countless tributes, everyone has a Mandela within, somewhere. He was probably referring to the nobler parts of our being, where empathy, forgiveness and a passion for justice abide.

Even as the world places Mandela on a pedestal, with soaring labels of "icon," "hero" and "giant of history," his failings and miscalculations and — more so — his understanding of his own fallibility allow for a more down-to-earth reading of the man. The Mandela media coverage reminds me of the kind of worship that many of the first independence-era leaders of post-colonial countries like my own enjoyed during their often too-long tenures in office. Their deaths also saw a surplus of father-of-the-nation invocations and too much emphasis on

misgivings about what will happen now that "the one and only" is gone.

As if the rest of us are capable only of following, complaining and critiquing. As if our human rights battles and other collective interests rely only on the actions and words of a once-in-a-lifetime messiah rather than the ongoing work of many.

In his 2009 book *Mandela's Way*, *Time* magazine editor Richard Stengel says the late anti-apartheid activist understood that the "unknown and unremembered acts of courage" of thousands "allowed him to demonstrate his." We don't have to look very hard for examples of individual and cooperative leadership discomfiting established political and economic power brokers and, eventually, forcing change.

As much as Pope Francis I is still mired in wearisome dogma about women's roles in the Church and the sanctity of heterosexual marriage, he has taken an unequivocal stand against the excesses of capitalism. "How can it be," he wonders, "that it is not a news item when an elderly homeless person dies of exposure, but it is news when the stock market loses two points?"

His swipe at trickle-down economics got the attention of the Rush Limbaugh rightwing roadshow, which deemed Francis's perspective as "pure Marxism."

Francis, who has opted personally for more muted vestments and less showy papal lodgings, countered, "In my life I have known many Marxists who are good people, so I don't feel offended."

Then there's Edward Snowden's brand of leadership. Whether you agree with his whistleblower actions or not, he is paying for what he has unleashed — and continues to reveal about the surveillance we live under — in currency that approaches the ultimate price: an imprisoning statelessness and rootlessness whose endgame, like Mandela's own incarceration, is fraught with uncertainty and danger and relies on patience and courage.

Meanwhile, the Indian Supreme Court's decision to uphold a colonial-era law criminalizing gay sex emboldened Indians at home and in the diaspora to turn out in at least 36 cities for a global day of rage. Together, they challenged a ruling they consider archaic and regressive.

Russian President Vladimir Putin's sanction of legalized homophobia falls woefully short of the high standards of leadership that Mandela set. But even as Putin demonstrates a willingness to fuel hostility for political gain, gay Russians and their allies at home and abroad are pushing back against their own version of Robben Island.

They don't have a Nelson Mandela, but they certainly have his example — and their own Madiba within.

*Natasha Barsotti is Xtra Vancouver's staff reporter.*

## FEEDBACK

### Qmunity 'gift'

I read about this "\$7million gift" that Jimmy Pattison wants to give to Qmunity ["City Staff Suggest \$7 Million to Qmunity," *Xtra* #528, Nov 21]. I doubt this is just a gift without strings, or even a gift for that matter. This angers me to no end. Gifts like this are tax deductions for his business. How much will go to signage to boost his advertising? Have we sold our Qmunity centre? Am I the only one that has questions?

**RANDALL LLOYD**  
**VANCOUVER, BC**

### Are we queer now?

Subjective memoirs are anyone's to offer ["Toward a Shared Identity," *Xtra* #528, Nov 21], but if you really wanted to do something useful, you would research, parse out, analyze and be able to speak critically about the key issue that you dismissed thusly: "By some invisible process of consensus we became queers."

The process may have been invisible to you, but there was no consensus and the name "queer," as in outsider à la Jean Genet, is not what "queer," as in theory and gender studies, means.

Also, how sad that you have friends of all the correct rainbow labels — any wheelchairs or natives or *fafafine* in there, or is your group just queens? Sorry, you mean well, but this is not helpful to gloss over what has been not unifying but divisive, mean-spirited and absurd. Queer is not queer. Look it up, dear.

**COELACANTH**  
**(DAILYXTRA.COM)**

It took me a long time to be able to say to myself "I am homosexual" and then later "I am gay." No one I know uses the word "queer" to identify themselves, and I will never do it. The word enrages me.

**UNLEARNED**  
**(DAILYXTRA.COM)**

### Generations of gay men

Forgive me for nitpicking, but as a gay man born in 1983 (today 30), I feel like I share more in common with guys born in the late '70s than boys born in the 1990s ["Five Generations of Gay Men," *dailyxtra.com*, Dec 1].

As a gay teenager in the '90s, it wasn't a walk in the park. The "plague" period was over, but the spectre of AIDS was all around. Public expressions of homophobia still went uncensored and unpunished. By the early 2000s, marriage equality was still just an idea and not law, whereas for someone born in 1993, they would have been only 10 when marriage equality became official in Ontario. Their gay youth didn't revolve around the club scene; it was more online-focused.

**RYAN**  
**(DAILYXTRA.COM)**

I've read Hammack's paper, and what amount to the speaking notes for his presentation at this conference. He has produced an important and apparently original taxonomy of the generations of gay men now alive. I would point out, though, that he missed Generation 6, the young post-gender queers who are rendering the first three generations invisible and extinct.

**JOE CLARK**  
**TORONTO, ON**  
**(DAILYXTRA.COM)**

**The outcome that we seek is this — gay and lesbian people daring together to set love free.**

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# XCETERA

HIGH CARAMBA!

## Spliff? Don't mind if 'I do'

Uruguay is on a real high this year: eight months after legalizing same-sex marriage, the South American nation on Dec 10 became the first country to legalize growing, selling and smoking pot. Spliff-smoking/same-sex-marriage package deal, anyone?



SETBACK

## WE WON'T BE RE-CLOSETED

In cities all across India, reaction of LGBT citizens and their allies to a Supreme Court decision upholding an 1860s law that criminalizes gay sex was swift. Demonstrators took to the streets waving Pride flags and bearing signs that read, "Proud to be gay," "We aren't criminals" and "You can't take away our rights" to protest the reversal of the 2009 Delhi high court ruling that struck down the colonial-era law, vowing to renew their fight.



KABI PHOTO (VIA REX WOCKNER)

DON'T SHOOT ME

“I am deeply saddened and shocked over the current legislation that is now in place against the LGBT community here in Russia. In my opinion, it is inhumane and it is isolating.”

Sir Elton John, onstage at his Dec 6 concert in Moscow. He dedicated the show to the memory of Vladislav Tornovoi, a 23-year-old gay man whose beaten body was found at an apartment in Volgograd.



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# Pushing for IOC protection

## Vancouver city council may send gay deputy mayor to Sochi

**POLITICS**  
**SHAUNA LEWIS**

Vancouver Mayor Gregor Robertson says he'll support a motion to lobby the International Olympic Committee (IOC) to protect gay athletes and encourage the establishment of Pride Houses at future Olympics.

“We held Games that welcomed the world, regardless of race, gender or sexual orientation,” Robertson told a press conference Dec 11. “Everyone was included and everyone was welcome here.

“Sadly, this does not appear to be the case with the 2014 Sochi Winter Games,” he said.

The motion, which goes to city council for a vote on Dec 18, will be introduced by Councillor Tim Stevenson.

If council approves the motion, Stevenson will travel to Sochi in February to represent the City of Vancouver as deputy mayor and to lobby the IOC to amend its Olympic charter to explicitly prohibit discrimination on the basis of sexual orientation.

He will also urge the IOC to direct all future host cities to facilitate and endorse the creation of community-led Pride Houses as part of their bids.

Community organizers launched the first Pride House here in Vancouver and Whistler at the 2010 Winter Games.

“It has always been my firm belief that the Olympics and Paralympics should be fully and unequivocally open to people who want to participate, regardless of their sexual orientation, and I'm dismayed to see that the important progress that we made here in Vancouver is being lost for these Games in Sochi,” Robertson said.

“Our objective is not to challenge Russian policy or to provoke an incident in Sochi,” Stevenson said, “but to channel support of the LGBTQ community in a positive direction with the IOC and the IPC [International Paralympic Committee] that helps future athletes.”

Stevenson's motion has received support from former Olympians such as Jon Montgomery, who won a gold medal in skeleton at the 2010 Winter Games.



Mayor Gregor Robertson (left) says he'll support Councillor Tim Stevenson's (right) motion to lobby the International Olympic Committee to protect gay athletes and support Pride Houses. SHAUNA LEWIS

“I would hope that the IOC does whatever it can to protect the rights of its athletes; stand up for equality amongst all races, genders and sexual orientations; and be a leader of change,” Montgomery said.

Local businessmen Bob Rennie and Peter Wall have each contributed \$25,000 to the Sochi mission, which would rely on private donations rather than taxpayer funds. In a joint statement, Wall and Rennie say they are supporting the mission because they “see an injustice and a singled-out group being attacked. This shouldn't happen in 2013 or 2014.”

While Vancouver has no authority to persuade the IOC to amend its charter or support Pride Houses, Robertson says city council has an ethical obligation to try.

“As an Olympic host city, one of the things you commit to doing is helping the Games get better with each city that hosts, and we're hoping that we may have a chance to do that,” he said.

“Certainly, our voice is important in this, and making people understand the importance of a Pride House and the protection and support and celebration of athletes, regardless of sexual orientation, is absolutely critical going forward for the Olympic and Paralympic movement,” he added.

“I don't think things will change in Sochi,” Stevenson said, pointing to Russia's anti-gay legislation. “But we want to ensure that there are safe places [for gay athletes] in every Olympics from here on in. We want to make sure that future countries have Pride Houses and that we don't have a situation like we do in Russia.”

Russia has come under international scrutiny since President Vladimir Putin signed a “gay propaganda” law in June, prohibiting the distribution of any information that could encourage children to consider engaging in “nontraditional sexual relations.” In August, Putin signed another decree banning all demonstrations and rallies in Sochi

between January and March to thwart protests by gay rights activists (and others) during the Games.

Jean-Claude Killy, chair of the IOC coordination commission, said in September that the IOC doesn't have the authority to intervene in Russia's laws. He also said he is confident there will be no discrimination against athletes or spectators in Sochi.

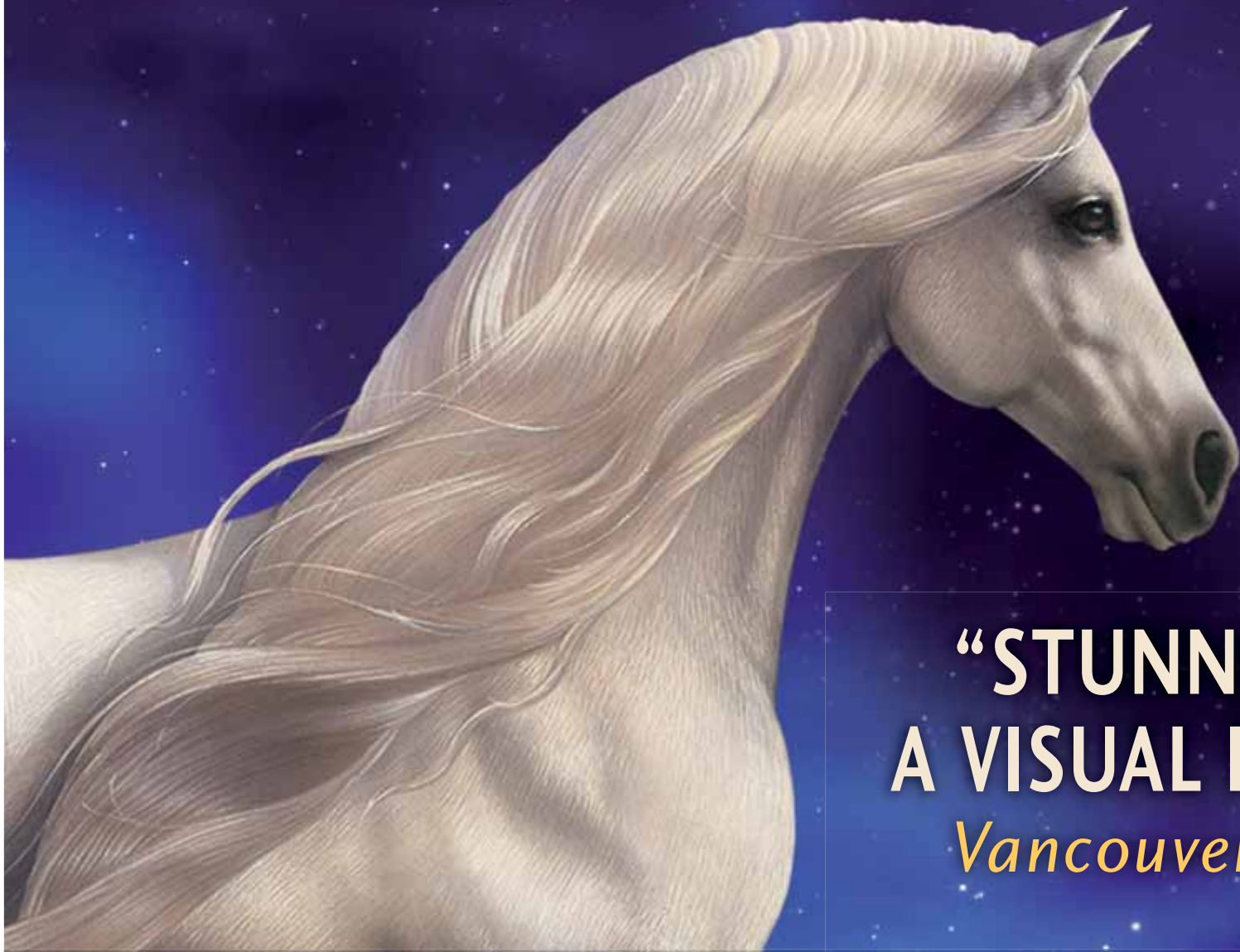
Russian officials have said their anti-gay-propaganda law is designed to protect children and doesn't infringe on the rights of gay people.

“Obviously, one is apprehensive,” Stevenson says, asked if he has safety concerns about traveling to Sochi as a gay man. “But I really feel it is absolutely crucial that we stand up.”

“I'm representing the City of Vancouver,” he adds, “and hopefully, Russia will not only be aware of that, but will honour that and see to it that I have the same protection that they're suggesting the athletes will have.”

# ODYSSEO

by *Cavalía*



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# Trinity Western can open law school

## Federation says it found no public-interest reason to refuse

### EDUCATION JEREMY HAINSWORTH

The Federation of Law Societies of Canada has granted preliminary approval to Trinity Western University (TWU) to open a law school that some in the legal community say would discriminate against prospective gay lawyers.

In order to be admitted to TWU, students must sign a covenant agreeing to uphold Christian biblical teachings, including no premarital sex and no homosexuality. Failure to uphold these commitments, according to the student handbook, could result in discipline, dismissal or a refusal to readmit a student to the university.

In granting TWU preliminary approval, the federation said it had to examine only whether the proposed law school's graduates would meet professional requirements for knowledge and competencies needed for entry to the bar admission programs in the Canadian common-law jurisdictions.

The final decision rests with the BC government.

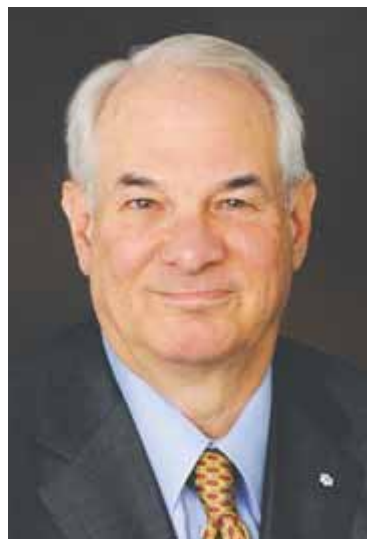
President Marie-Claude Bélanger-Richard tells *Xtra* the federation was "deluged" with comments and opinions both for and against TWU's application.

The federation appointed a special advisory committee of members of the legal profession to examine the feedback, she says.

The committee concluded that as long as the national requirement is met, there is no public-interest reason to exclude future graduates of the TWU program from law society bar admission programs.

Toronto lawyer Clayton Ruby tells *Xtra* the federation's decision is humiliating to the legal profession and an insult to the gay community.

"Gays and lesbians are second-class citizens," he says. "The door has moved a little more tightly closed against gays and lesbians becoming lawyers and judges. A crucial part of democratic



Lawyer Clayton Ruby says the Federation of Law Societies of Canada's decision to grant Trinity Western preliminary approval is an embarrassment to the legal profession. COURTESY OF CLAYTON RUBY


life is the openness of this profession."

He says TWU's law school would impose a "queer quota" on incoming law students. He estimates that there are approximately 1,600 places in law schools across Canada and that the 60 new places proposed by TWU would be off-limits to openly gay students.

"Straight students are eligible for 1,660 seats, and then there's a quota based on an immutable characteristic for being gay — unacceptable and unconstitutional," he says.

Ruby told *Xtra* Dec 13 that approval could be open to a court challenge but now says he'll wait to see what happens next before considering his legal options.

Until the TWU law school produces its first graduates, its approval will remain preliminary and be subject to regular reviews by the federation.

 Read the full story on [dailyxtra.com](http://dailyxtra.com).



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Russian President Vladimir Putin signed off in June on a law to ban gay "propaganda" in Russia.  
ENRICO VARRASSO

# NEWSMAKE

## NEWSMAKER #1

### Vladimir Putin

Before Russian President Vladimir Putin signed off this summer on a nationwide law to gag gay "propaganda," cities such as St Petersburg tested the waters — and got away with it.

The barely audible international whisper against Russia's growing anti-gay crackdown became a firestorm in June when Putin, seemingly oblivious to the backlash that would erupt, signed the law with the Sochi Winter Olympics in sight. Prohibiting "propaganda of nontraditional sexual relations," the law is ostensibly aimed at protecting children from thoughts or images that might awaken any gay interests or give them the impression that such interests are as acceptable as more traditional forms of attraction.

Foreigners flouting the law with a

gay-friendly gesture face the prospect of 15 days in prison and deportation.

Mere months before Sochi's opening ceremonies, Russia's increasingly anti-gay stance suddenly provoked outrage, calls for boycotts, and kiss-ins around the world. Putin and his entourage wondered what all the fuss was about.

While one Vitaly (sports minister Mutko) told the world to calm down, a second Vitaly (St Petersburg politician Milonov) pooh-pooed reports of violence against gay people as "fake information," adding that it's gay people who perpetrate violence against straight people.

For his part, Putin insists that he's just protecting the children. But his platitudes are inconsistent with the images emerging from Russia: beaten

and bloodied gay activists; gay teachers dismissed from their jobs; gun and gas attacks at a Moscow gay club; bomb threats against the Side by Side LGBT film festival; the rise of the violent "Occupy Pedophilia" group that seems to lure, then torment gay people (or worse). The likelihood of more anti-gay laws looms, with one bill proposing to remove children from gay parents in Russia.

The International Olympic Committee seems content to accept "assurances from the highest authorities in Russia" that their Olympics will be welcoming, regardless of sexual orientation. At least the Nobel Committee refused a Putin nomination for this year's Peace Prize, for his "efforts to maintain peace and tranquility."

## NEWSMAKER #2

### Rainbow city

It's been a banner year for gay recognition by the City of Vancouver.

In May, city council finally granted the Pride parade civic status after a decade of discussion. Two months later, staff painted permanent rainbow crosswalks at the Davie-Bute intersection to highlight the heart of the city's gay village. And on Nov 20, council passed a new community plan for the West End that officially recognizes the Davie Village as the hub of the gay community and promises to strengthen and celebrate "its distinct flavour as the gay village."

"I'm a little bit emotional," Councillor Tim Stevenson told council moments before the new West End plan



The rainbow crosswalk on Davie Street. JON HAYWOOD

passed. "We've achieved civic status for the Pride parade, we have rainbow crosswalks in the West End, and now, for the first time, the community is actually embedded in the plan."

## NEWSMAKER #3

### Foreskin Pride

Foreskin Pride made headlines this year when the Vancouver Pride Society (VPS) refused to let the anti-circumcision group march pantsless in the parade. VPS organizers said their refusal was more because of space constraints than nudity and hinted at past violations of parade rules, though no particulars were ever provided.

Still, VPS general manager Ray Lam told *Xtra* that organizers can't publicly sanction illegal activities. "We have to follow the law, and it's clearly stated in the law that you can't be nude in public," he said. "That is not something that has to do with Vancouver Pride. That's not our rules and regulations. We have to follow the law."

Both city officials and the Vancouver Police Department denied putting any pressure on Pride to crack down on



Glen Callender at Toronto Pride.  
ALLAN SELORIO

nudity, despite the parade's new civic designation.

Foreskin Pride founder Glen Callender said the VPS unfairly censored his group in a parade meant to celebrate free expression. Though Callender would have been just as happy, given the chance, to march his anti-circumcision message down Denman Street fully clothed, he said he was "deeply concerned at the prospect of the VPS cracking down on nudity when the city and police have indicated they are willing to tolerate it."

"If the VPS's tolerance of harmless public nudity at Pride is now to the right of the city and the police, then our community has a problem," he said.

# RS OF 2013

*The people and events that shaped our year*

BY NATASHA BARSOTTI  
& ROBIN PERELLE



QAF artistic director Shaira (SD) Holman. DAVID P BALL

## NEWSMAKER #4

### Queer Arts Fest funding

Three months before this year's Queer Arts Festival (QAF) was scheduled to open, the federal government suddenly rescinded its funding in April.

In a letter to organizers, the Department of Canadian Heritage said the festival no longer fit the sponsorship criteria to deliver "measurable and tangible results, to optimize available funds, and to meet the needs of Canadians." (Toronto's Buddies in Bad Times Theatre received a very similar letter in November.) Two days after QAF went public about its funding cut, Canadian Heritage quietly reinstated 75 percent of its grant, without explanation.

Though artistic director Shaira (SD) Holman was shocked by the sudden cut — and its equally sudden, partial restoration — she was impressed by the power of public outcry. "We saw so much community pressure to the government to reverse its decision."

## NEWSMAKER #5

### Pope Francis

"If someone is gay and he searches for the Lord and has good will, who am I to judge?"

With that intriguing answer to a question about gay priests, Argentina's Jorge Mario Bergoglio, aka Pope Francis I, lit up the internet and set tongues a-wagging.

Progressives heralded change, traditionalists smelled heresy, and skeptics

noted the absence of promises to redirect "doctrinal truths."

Wherever people fall on the continuum of reactions to the new pope's persona and pronouncements, it's clear that this engaging, gregarious successor to popes Benedict XVI and John Paul II is intent on change, if not on fundamentals, then in tone and appearance.

He has certainly denounced what he sees as a rapacious capitalism that leaves the poor in the dust and deepens economic inequality. He's more cautious on inequalities pertaining to sexuality and gender, though.

Ordaining women is "not a question open to discussion," he says.

As for that survey he sent out ahead of a 2014 confab about families, the questions about gay marriage and relationships read more like a temperature-taking of their growing acceptance and the challenge they



Jorge Mario Bergoglio, aka Pope Francis I. WIKIMEDIA COMMONS

pose to the Catholic Church than a bid to throw down the welcome mat.

Still, Rome wasn't built in a day, and Francis's nine-month papacy has been a revelation, if not yet substantially revolutionary.

## NEWSMAKER #6

### Tying knots

As legal gay marriage turned 10 in BC and Ontario, momentum continued to build globally as a series of countries and American states also granted gay couples the right to tie the knot.

In April, Uruguay became the second country in South America, after Argentina, to legalize same-sex mar-



Momentum for gay marriage continued to build. THINKSTOCK

riage. New Zealand followed suit, and, after months of contentious debate, France said "oui" too.

In May, Brazil's National Council of Justice told officials to stop rejecting gay couples seeking marriage licences, and in July, the Queen gave her royal assent to a bill legalizing gay marriage in England and Wales.

As the year drew to a close, the Australian Capital Territory became the first jurisdiction on the southern continent to legalize gay marriage, though the court soon nixed that plan.

In the US, two key Supreme Court decisions in June led to the resumption of gay marriages in California and the striking down of a key section of the Defense of Marriage Act (DOMA). In steady succession, Rhode Island, Delaware, Minnesota, New Jersey, Illinois and Hawaii granted gay couples the right to marry.

## NEWSMAKER #7

### Priape closes

Though a deal was reached to keep Priape's flagship store in Montreal open, its Vancouver, Toronto and Calgary stores closed their doors permanently in November.

The gay retailer had been under



Former Priape manager Del Stamp. ROB EASTON

bankruptcy protection since June 27. Denis Leblanc, formerly the general manager and now co-owner of the remaining Priape, blamed the company's struggles on Health Canada's order to stop selling poppers, though it appears Priape's financial woes and debt started long before the June ban on poppers sales.

Vancouver manager Del Stamp said the Davie Street store had met or exceeded all its sales goals since he took management three years ago.



Surrey school board vice-chair Laurie Larsen. DAVID P BALL

## NEWSMAKER #8

### Surrey school board

The school district that once fought all the way to the Supreme Court of Canada to avoid adding gay-friendly books to its classrooms passed an anti-discrimination policy in November that specifically addresses homophobia.

"Homophobic and/or transphobic comments, discrimination, bullying, and attacks are demeaning to all students, parents or guardians and employees regardless of their actual or perceived sexual orientation," the new policy says.

The district says it will not tolerate any homophobic or transphobic behaviour — "whether by commission or by failing to act to end such behaviour."

## NEWSMAKER #9

### Abbotsford Pride

More than 500 people took part in the Fraser Valley's first Pride parade on May 25, five years after opponents deterred a student initiative to hold a parade in the conservative area.

This year's celebration drew a supportive speech from the mayor of Abbotsford and the participation of various Christian groups who called on co-religionists to reconsider their opposition to homosexuality.

"All members of our community need to feel safe and secure," Mayor Bruce Banman told the crowd. "They need to feel they can contribute to our community; they need to feel they are given the opportunity to express themselves and to grow."

Members of the Fraser Valley Youth Society organized and led the parade. X



Abbotsford's first Pride parade. DAVID P BALL

# The custodian of our memories

## Archivist Ron Dutton lives and breathes BC's queer history



**STILL QQ**  
**KEVIN DALE**  
**MCKEOWN**

*Last month we launched a conversation on the future of "queer identity" and I promised to report back. Things happen, and we're taking longer than planned to get that organized. We'll pick it up again next month, but today let's take a diversion to visit the custodian of our community's memory.*

"We need to own and control our own history."

That sums up Ron Dutton's organizing principle when it comes to his life work, the BC Gay and Lesbian Archives.

The first time I visit the home-based archives I expect to find a small West End apartment jammed with boxes, piles of paper, overflowing file cabinets and walls of old photos and posters. Similar to my own little den.

Somehow I missed the memo about Dutton being a trained and experienced librarian/archivist, so his spacious,



Every inch of possible space in archivist Ron Dutton's bedroom carefully houses 40 years worth of meticulously filed clippings, posters, flyers and other ephemera, including scribbles on the backs of after-hours-club napkins. JANET RERECICH

uncluttered home is a bit of a surprise. As we have a getting-to-know-you chat over coffee I keep glancing around, admiring his collection of folkloric masks and artwork, wondering where the heck he could have stashed the stuff!

"Let me show you around," Dutton invites, leading me into his equally spacious bedroom, with burlwood panelling along three walls — the sort of panels that slide open to reveal built-in closet space. Except that when Dutton opens his closets, he reveals rows and rows and boxes and boxes of meticulously filed, labelled and cross-indexed... well, just about everything! Forty years worth of clippings, posters, flyers, newsletters, bar tokens, photos, postcards, bulletin board postings and scribbles on the backs of after-hours club napkins.

You name it: if it records, or even hints at, the life of the gay, lesbian and trans community in British Columbia, Dutton has it. Sometimes in duplicate.

I've no idea where he keeps his clothes ("Let's just say it's a good thing I'm no fashion plate," he says), but every square inch of possible storage space is devoted to what now runs to about three-quarters of a million carefully catalogued individual items.

"When I arrived here from Regina in '75, Vancouver was a political stew of women's movements, gay collec-

theatre demonstrations. I was a radical librarian, and I just jumped right in. It was a hopeful time, unlike today, and there was a palpable sense that we were changing the world... that history was in the making."

And of course, wherever history is being made, someone needs to be collecting the evidence. Dutton realized that nobody else was documenting this amazing era and, applying his professional skills, started doing just that.

"From the beginning I've been collecting backward as well as forward," he explains. Tracking down souvenirs from the 1930s and '40s, of course, but also combing academic records for such things as intimations of two-spirit persons among BC's aboriginal people at the time of the Spanish arrival on the BC coast.

"I pull things from hidden and reluctant records," he enthuses, "and reclaim them for our story."

Recent additions include 20 photo scrapbooks documenting the career of Adrian De Vander Vogue, Empress IX, and a box of VHS tapes recording Dogwood Monarchist Society events through the 1970s and '80s. More drag than you can shake a sceptre at!

"No archive is ever complete," Dutton says, with an acquisitive gleam in his eye. "There is so much material, past, present and about to be created tomor-

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row. I live in downtown Vancouver, and that is largely what I see. But beyond my horizons there are treasures to be found as nearby as Surrey and Victoria and as far afield as the smallest communities in rural BC, where courageous gays and lesbians have been reclaiming their own stories.

"We also need more material from women's and ethnic groups to counter-balance our media's tendency to be male, middle class and middle aged," he adds.

Which brings us to the pitch. Dutton is our collector-in-chief, and we are fortunate to have a meticulous and knowledgeable professional keeping our treasures intact. But we are the primary sources. That box of old party photos under the bed, the souvenirs from AIDS fundraisers in the early days of the crisis, the ledger with the scribbled minutes of your long-disbanded consciousness-raising group, a copy of the poster you put up at Little Sister's yesterday. "I'm the last stop before the dumpster!" Dutton says.

We need this stuff and we need to get it safely into Ron Dutton's hands. It's pretty easy to do. Call him at 604-669-5978 or email him at [rondutton@shaw.ca](mailto:rondutton@shaw.ca). ✕

*Kevin Dale McKeown was Vancouver's first out gay columnist, penning QQ Writes . . . Page 69 for the Georgia Straight through the early 1970s.*



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## From pointe to porn

Andrew Binks's new novel takes a semi-autobiographical look at a ballet dancer turned stripper

### IN PRINT RAZIEL REID

It was inadequacy, in part, that drove Andrew Binks to write *Strip*; an attempt to tie up the loose laces of his ballet slippers.

“There’s a certain amount of regret,” the author says candidly of that period of his life, in the 1980s. “Just a tremendous sense of inadequacy, really.”

Binks’s second novel follows college dropout turned ballet dancer John, as he transitions from pointe shoes gliding across a concert hall as second soloist for a prestigious dance company to bare feet on a sticky strip-ter stage in a garish Old Quebec nightclub.

Like his main character, Binks has had careers both as a professional ballet dancer and as a stripper. Although he maintains that his novel is not a memoir — even rewriting portions that relied too heavily on personal experience to make the plot more interesting — it is based on real life and a desire to find resolution.

“Kent was based on a very real person,” he says. “There was some kind of relationship and resolution that I wanted to achieve through the writing of the story, which I think in real life never completed itself. So I struggled with that. There’s sort of a ‘what may have been.’”

In *Strip*, we first meet John in a stairwell, where he lies naked and bleeding after a rape. “More naive than self-destructive” is how Binks describes his blond, pretty boy from an upper-middle-class Alberta family who dances across

Canada, eventually unwinding from an interminable pirouette and finding himself in a dizzying confrontation with the demanding, ruthless and anorexic world of ballet.

It was an anything-goes era full of possibility, overshadowed by fear.

“There was this unknown element [to AIDS] then,” Binks says. “So when somebody close to you was sick, you were confronted with these feelings of how close can I be with this person?”

And the shame of feeling that way because instinctively you knew we could share the same spoon or whatever, but then there was this real science-fiction element to it, about what might make you sick.”

Even more than capturing the onset of AIDS or the liberation it curtailed, Binks’s true triumph lies in transporting the reader into the tragic and enchanting life of a dancer. With each page I flipped, I hoped my spine would elongate, my heels would arch and my destiny would be as divine as the restless dreamers he so intimately depicts.

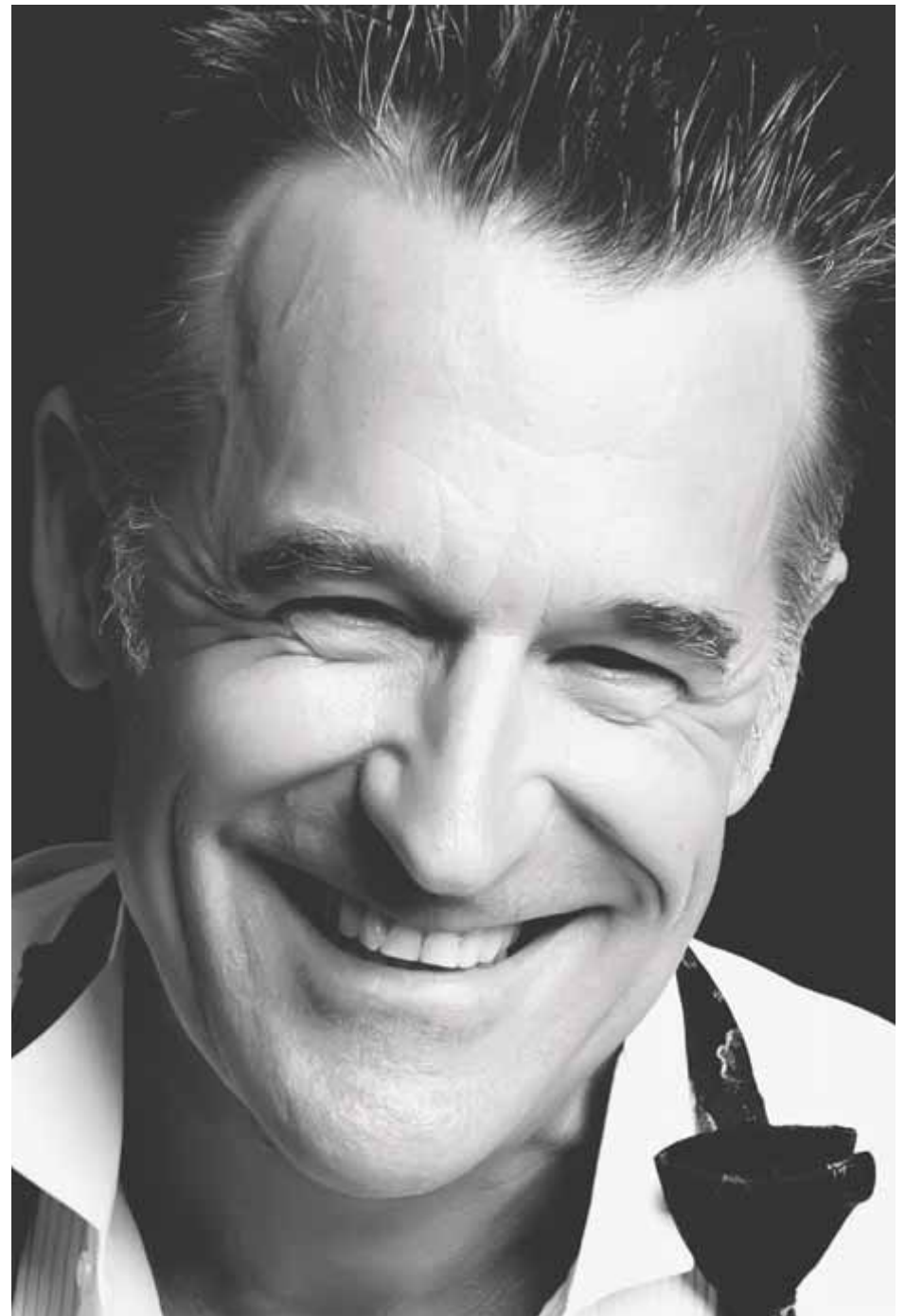
Three decades on, John and Binks’s story remains relevant. Earlier this year, CockyBoys pornstar Jett Black, birth name Jeppe Hansen, was allegedly kicked out of the Royal Winnipeg Ballet for “taking a different standpoint artistically” through his sex work, he claims.

“They told me... they didn’t have any space for me because I did porn,” Hansen told CBC in July. Asked to comment, ballet officials refused to discuss personnel issues.

Binks says he wouldn’t be surprised if a ballet company looked unfavourably on a side career in



**STRIP**  
By Andrew Binks  
Nightwood Editions  
andrewbinks.ca



Andrew Binks wrote his second novel, *Strip*, partly to seek resolution and partly to imagine what might have been. HARBOUR PUBLISHING

porn. “Working in the company or in the professional program is all-encompassing,” he says. “It seemed to me that any outside activity was more or less frowned upon as your life should have been completely devoted to dance.... It was a closed world.”

“Although I don’t know the specifics of Jett Black’s case, it is certainly the company’s loss if they gave him no ultimatum or provided no support to make ends meet, as it were. He seems

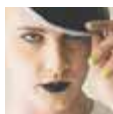
to be a fine dancer — not to mention pornstar.”

Like John in *Strip*, Hansen found that his sexuality was “unleashed” after being pushed out of professional dance.

“I think the outside world perceives dance as a very gay place, and yet when you’re there it’s not,” Binks says. “It may be easier to connect with other gay people and be more relaxed in your behaviour, but you’re still going to run into people who have very strong opinions about sexuality.” X

# The holidays are a drag

‘Merry Christmas and all that festive shit,’ as Bill Monroe says



**BLITZ & SHITZ**  
**RAZIELL REID**

You may think ‘tis the season when you can’t walk past a sex shop without seeing slutty Christmas costumes in the window, but ‘tisn’t really the season until you’ve seen those slutty costumes on a drag queen.

Enter Carlotta Gurl. At Coco’s 13th annual Christmas show at the Fountainhead, she got my vote for sleaziest Mrs Claus, with her red stockings and sequined bra. I’m pretty sure I saw the box under her Christmas tree.

“If I were Mrs Claus, Santa would come more than once a year,” the Gurl said before singing a live rendition of “Santa Baby” that would turn Rudolph’s cheeks as red as his nose.

Carlotta was one of several performers singing live at the Christmas special. Anida Tythole sang “White Christmas” a cappella and was adorably nervous as she took the stage. “I’ve never sang live in drag before,” she admitted, “except once in Abbotsford. But that doesn’t count, right?”

Joan-E also showed off her impressive pipes with “Santa Claus Is Coming to Town.” Her blonde coiffure was Marilyn Monroe personified.

But it was the other Monroe — Bill Monroe, that is — who gave my favourite performance of the night. “Merry Christmas and all that festive shit,” she said when she took the stage. After asking the crowd if they had their plane tickets home for the holidays, she sighed, “I’d go back to my hometown in Ontario, but I don’t think they’d like to see me in this dress...”

With a wink, she then sang “If My Friends Could See Me Now,” a song about embracing our innate fabulousness, the one thing the gays don’t need any elves to create for them.

We may be able to cross fabulousness off our collective list, but I’m with Miss M on this one: “Make my Christmas four carats, please,” she cooed during her number.

Speaking of getting spoiled, I recently went up to a group of gentlemen on Davie Street and began the conversation by saying, “Hai, daddies!” — which is how I start basically every conversation with strange old men. One of them kept saying to me, “I’m a daddy but not a sugar daddy,” and after I got over my initial disappointment, I tried to figure out why he felt a need to keep repeating that.

Then I realized he reads my column and I’ve spun this slutty web where



Raziell joined Coco (right) for her 13th annual holiday show at the Fountainhead, featuring live renditions of Christmas classics and other odes to fabulousness.

ALVIN GRADO

everyone sees me as a black widow — and keeps their distance because they’re afraid I’m poisonous. So I think I may need to establish some rules for reading Blitz & Shitz: a) get tested after each paragraph and b) take it with a big bump of, uh, salt.

But I digress! Back to the other ho ho

hos in Vancouver. Allow me to give a shout-out to Jaylene Tyme, Ada Burger and Kiki Lawhore: Jaylene for those *Pretty Woman* hooker boots, which I’d better unwrap Christmas morning or Santa wrongly thought I was nice this year; Ada for giving the best lip-sync of the season; and Kiki for proving once again that Miley totally got the whole sticking-out-her-tongue thing from Lawhore.

There were 19 queens performing at Coco’s Christmas show and a singular king. “Jesus got three kings; we only got one,” MC Steven Schelling said into the mic before shrugging, “but we’re not quite as holy.”

And thank god for that.

Buster Cherry may have been reppin’ the kingdom solo, but his performance was everything. He had a trumpet as a prop and the most impressive sideburns, which my twink cheeks (I think that’s the first time I’ve written those words together and meant the ones on my face) could grow only if granted a Christmas miracle.

There were tons of prize giveaways during the show, including an iPad, luggage, beer and Cher tickets. When Schelling announced the prizes, he was shocked to find the booze received louder applause than the Dark Lady. “What kind of gays are you?” he demanded.

Drunk ones, evidently. But also generous ones. Coco’s holiday extravaganza raised \$2,000 for Friends for Life, Wings Housing Society and the Vancouver Food Bank.

Not that anyone needs a reason to drink this time of year (or ever, if you’re me), but I will say cheers to that! X



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# WHAT'S ON

FOR MORE EVENT LISTINGS, GO TO [DAILYXTRA.COM](http://DAILYXTRA.COM)

## Wed, Dec 18

**Christmas Bingo** Join DJ Drew and Robyn Graves for the Christmas edition of Bingo for Life, benefiting Friends for Life. 8:30pm. Celebrities, 1022 Davie St. \$10 donation for bingo cards. celebritiesnightclub.com

**Fauxgirls Christmas** Mandy Kamp, Coco and their guests kick off Christmas week a bit early. 11pm. The Junction, 1138 Davie St. \$3 cover for the Dogwood Monarchist Society. junctionpub.com

## Sat, Dec 21

**Tomboy** Vancouver's newest queer night for boyish girls, girly girls and girly bois who like girls, with DJ Kasey Riot spinning a mix of electro, house, trap and dub. 9pm–2am. Heaven's Door, 1216 Bute St. \$5. heavensdoor.ca

**Not So Strictly Ballroom** Vancouver's same-sex ballroom and Latin dance group celebrates the holidays with a waltz lesson, suitable for all levels, at 8:45pm. Newcomers are welcome; no partner required. 8–11:30pm. Let's Dance Studio, 927 Granville St, 2nd floor. Tickets \$12–15 at Little Sister's, 1238 Davie St or email notsostrictly@hotmail.com. notsostrictlyballroom.ca

**White Christmas Sing-Along** Oasis hosts a sing-along to the Bing Crosby classic. 7–11pm. Oasis Ultra Lounge, 1240 Thurlow St. Entrance by donation. oasisondavie.com

**Blowpony Christ-Mess** Blowpony presents Rap Girl, a size-positive queer feminist rapper from Portland, and Boy Funk, the boy your mama warned you about. 9:30pm. The Cobalt, 917 Main St. \$7. blowpony.com

**Absolut'ly Dragulous** Join Carlotta Gurl for her yearly tribute to Christmas, with guests, live numbers, contests and more. 10:30pm. The Junction, 1138 Davie St. \$5. junctionpub.com

## Sun, Dec 22

**Cruise Cinema Sunday** Hang out with other porn-loving guys in Vancouver's newest gay sex club. 2–8 pm. Club 8x6, 1775 Haro St. \$10 or \$5 each with a buddy. 8x6.ca

## Mon, Dec 23

**Christmas with Carlotta** Carlotta Gurl ushers in the holiday season with her new Monday-night show. 9pm. Oasis Ultra Lounge, 1240 Thurlow St. No cover. oasisondavie.com

**The Bobbers** Vancouver's favourite queer improv comedy troupe is back in the Davie Village with a new weekly performance. 7–9pm. Heaven's Door (formerly J-Lounge), 1216 Bute St. No cover. heavensdoor.ca

## Tues, Dec 24

**Orphan Xmas** Bring your favourite board games and snacks and join DJs Skinny Pete and Rideout and the Cobalt gang for drinks, eggnog and the greatest Christmas movie of all time: *Die Hard*. 9pm. The Cobalt, 917 Main St. No cover. thecobalt.ca

## Thurs, Dec 26

**Liberace** Celebrities presents DJ Kitty Glitter from Australia. 10pm. Celebrities, 1022 Davie St. \$10 advance at celebritiesnightclub.com.

**Hershe Bar** Vancouver's popular lesbian party features

DJ Miss M spinning a mix of house and hip hop. 10pm–2am. Bar None, 1222 Hamilton St. \$15 advance at Little Sister's, 1238 Davie St; Kokopelli Salon, 2052 Commercial Dr; or online at flygirlproductions.com.

**Latin Night** Vancouver's longest-running gay Latino night features a drag show and Latin music the last Thursday of every month. 10pm–2am. Oasis Ultra Lounge, 1240 Thurlow St. \$5. oasisondavie.com

**The Sundown** The Cobalt hosts a laid-back gathering for queer women and their allies every Thursday night. 9pm. The Cobalt, 917 Main St. \$3–6. thecobalt.ca

**Gay and Bisexual Men's Bereavement Support Group** This free support group for men grieving the loss of a same-sex partner meets the second and fourth Thursday of each month. 7–9:30pm. Qmunity, Room 610, 1033 Davie St. qmunity.ca

## Fri, Dec 27

**Queer Women on the Drive** This monthly women's activities and crafts group meets the last Friday of each month. 7pm. Britannia Community Centre, Seniors' Lounge, 1661 Napier St. qmunity.ca

## Sat, Dec 28

**Black Saturday: VML** Join the Vancouver Men in Leather for their monthly get-together. Dress code: leather, rubber and fetish. 9pm. PumpJack Pub, 1167 Davie St. No cover. pumpjackpub.com

## Tues, Dec 31

**PumpJack NYE** Ring in the new year with a masquerade-themed night, with DJ Jay Douglas, scantily clad bartenders and lots of hot men. Open until 4am. PumpJack Pub, 1167 Davie St. No cover. pumpjackpub.com

**Magic!** Big Roger Events brings you DJs Del Stamp, Adam Dreddy and Nick Bertossi, plus a special performance by Mantra. 10pm–4am. The Ticket, 808 Beatty St. \$40–50 advance at Little Sister's, 1238 Davie St or clubzone.com/bigroger.

**Descent** Gingerbear Todd presents DJ Neill MacLeod (Toronto). 1–8am. Club 816 (formerly The World), 816 Granville St. \$40. club816.com

**Cream** Crema presents DJs Tracey D and Kasha Kennedy. 9pm–2am. Heaven's Door, 1216 Bute St. \$20 advance at Little Sister's, 1238 Davie St

or cremaproductions.com. heavensdoor.ca

**Party Martyr NYE** DJs ManyBothans, Rezurrection, Fagbot and Lazer Tits will take you into 2014. 10pm–4am. Franklin Studios, 1622 Franklin St. \$10 before midnight, \$15 after.

**Celebrities NYE** DJs Timeline, Yurie and JP Valdes ring in the New Year with a countdown on the LED wall. 9pm–4am. Celebrities, 1022 Davie St. Tickets \$35 or VIP package for four tickets and a bottle of champagne at celebritiesnightclub.com.

**Studio 54 NYE** Join Jaylene Tyme, Maxine Pad, Maxwell Maxwell, DJ G Luve and the 54 Boys for New Year's Eve. 9pm. Oasis Ultra Lounge, 1240 Thurlow St. \$10. oasisondavie.com

**Ruff NYE** MN Events and Steamworks will name Mr Ruff 2014, with DJs Nick Bertossi and San Diego's Shane Stiel and performances by the BMW RUFFmen. The Sisters of Perpetual Indulgence will run a shuttle service from the Sandman on Davie Street for a suggested \$5 donation to charity. 8pm–midnight. Maritime Labour Centre, 1880 Triumph St. \$35 before Dec 30; \$40 Dec 31 at Little Sister's, 1238 Davie St, mnevents.ca or at the door.

**Compact Disco** Truckerdisco's NYE party features DJ Taffi Louis playing all kinds of disco. 9:30pm. The Den at the Barclay, 1348 Robson St. \$10–15 at eventbrite.ca; \$20 at door if available. truckerdisco.com

**Junction NYE 2014** Mandy Kamp and DJs Mike Bauer and Drew invite you to share a champagne toast and balloon drop at midnight. 9pm–4am. The Junction, 1138 Davie St. \$20. junctionpub.com

**VOCW NYE Dance** The Vancouver Outdoor Club for Women hosts an evening of dancing, food, champagne at midnight and, of course, lots of women. 8:30pm–1am. Ukrainian Hall, 805 E Pender St. \$25 members, \$30 non-members at Sophie's Pet Palace, 1280 Commercial Dr or Little Sister's, 1238 Davie St. groupspaces.com/outdoorwomen

**Queer As Funk** Vancouver's all-queer eight-piece Motown/soul/funk band plays everything from Stevie Wonder and Aretha Franklin to Cee Lo Green and Amy Winehouse. 9pm–2am. The Capri Hall, 3925 Fraser St. \$50 at nywithqaf.brownpapertickets.com.

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# Cancun & the Mayan Riviera

A paradise of white-sand beaches and turquoise waters

## TROY PETENBRINK

For many people, mentioning Cancun evokes MTV's spring-break specials, with hordes of drunken college kids partying as if the world were going to end. While Cancun remains a popular destination for spring breakers, its appeal has broadened as visitors have discovered it offers much more than just wet T-shirt contests and creative drinking games.

Part of the Mexican state of Quintana Roo, on the eastern part of the Yucatan Peninsula, Cancun is also the northern anchor of a 130-kilometre stretch of breathtaking coastline known as the Mayan Riviera. The name comes from the Mayan empire, which once occupied Cancun and the surrounding area. It thrived for thousands of years until Spanish colonization in the 15th century, after which the region entered a period of turmoil and decline.

The rebirth of Cancun began in the 1970s, when the area was mostly overgrown jungle and barren sand dunes. Government tourism officials had visions of transforming the region, with its beautiful white-sand beaches and turquoise waters, into a tourism mecca. Millions of dollars were invested, and now, following extensive development, the region is responsible for approximately a third of Mexico's total tourism income.

The desire for tourism, coupled with a strong focus on hospitality, makes the region a welcoming destination for everyone — there is widespread tolerance and acceptance of LGBT people in Cancun and throughout the Mayan Riviera. Bolstering the region's stance as an LGBT-friendly destination is a federal law that banned discrimination based on sexual orientation in 2003, with Quintana Roo also becoming the second state in Mexico to officially recognize same-sex marriages, in May 2012. Security isn't an issue, as, unlike many parts of Mexico that have struggled with violence and high crime rates, primarily linked to drug cartels, Cancun and the Mayan Riviera have remained some of the safest parts of the country.

The two most difficult decisions to make on any trip to Quintana Roo — beyond which bathing suits to pack — are choosing where to stay and what to do.

As Cancun was the first location to be transformed under the government's tourism plan, it's the most developed city in the region and has the largest concentration of hotels. Its many grand, high-rise hotels are concentrated in the Hotel Zone, a 27-kilometre strip of land bordered by the Caribbean Sea on the east and the Nichupte Lagoon on the west. Almost all the hotels provide direct beach access, and five-star ratings abound, including such luxury proper-



JASON DECAIRES TAYLOR

Above, Cancun Underwater Museum features a series of sculptures by Jason deCaires Taylor, off the coast of Cancun and Isla Mujeres. Right, shade umbrellas on the beach in Cancun.

ties as the Ritz-Carlton Cancun and the JW Marriott Cancun Spa and Resort. There are still some budget properties to be found in the Hotel Zone, but they're in the minority, with most located in downtown Cancun, far from the beach.

Located at the southern end of the Mayan Riviera, Playa del Carmen has become almost as popular as Cancun in recent years. There has, however, been an ongoing effort to prevent overdevelopment. Also, unlike Cancun, where visitors rarely stray from the Ho-





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ANDREW HITCHCOCK

**Above, an aerial view of Cancun. Top right, ruins at Tulum, on the Mayan Riviera. Right, traditional Mexican souvenirs.**

inns, like the gay-owned Casa Sirena. There is regular ferry service to Cancun that allows for daytime excursions, but service stops at midnight, so it's not ideal for late-night revellers — in keeping with the quiet, relaxing nature of the island.

Tulum, located south of Playa, is home to a few large resorts, but its properties are typically small, hip, eco-friendly hotels that operate using alternative-energy sources. Similarly, Puerto Morelos, located between Playa and Cancun, provides a more laid-back scene and intimate properties. Regardless of where you stay in Cancun or the Mayan Riviera, it's easy to explore and take advantage of the entire region's diverse offerings.

With the crystal clear waters of the Caribbean Sea and the Mesoamerican Reef, the Mayan Riviera boasts some of the best snorkelling in the world across the entire Quintana Roo shoreline. The waters around Isla Mujeres and the island of Cozumel near Playa are also a haven for scuba divers.

Garrafon, Xplor, Xcaret and Xel-Ha are large ecological parks that offer activities such as zip lining, rafting and tours of underground rivers. Most of the eco parks and some tour operators also specialize in dolphin-swimming programs.

One of the main reasons to visit the Mayan Riviera, though, is for the Mayans themselves. Stunning ruins of the ancient Mayan cities that once dominated the region make for magical tours. Chichen Itza, a World Heritage Site and one of the "New Seven Wonders of the World," is located about two hours west of Cancun. Coba, another large, ancient Mayan city, is located about two hours west of Playa. For extra drama, the ruins of ancient Tulum sit on the edge of a cliff overlooking the Caribbean Sea.

With its spring-break roots, it should come as no surprise that Cancun also offers world-class nightlife. Large clubs like CoCo Bongo, Dady'O and Señor Frog's bring people of all backgrounds together for outstanding music and light shows. Although not as large as those

in Cancun, the nightlife spots in Playa, such as the lounge in Hotel Deseo and Tequila Barrel, can be a great night out.

Cancun and Playa also have clubs that cater to LGBT guests. In Cancun, the gay clubs are Karamba, Sexy's and 11:11, located within walking distance of each other along Tulum Avenue in downtown. The main gay club in Playa is the beachside Playa 69. It is important to keep in mind that gay clubs typically draw their crowds on the weekends, after midnight.

Whatever your reason for visiting Cancun or one of the many places along the beautiful Mayan Riviera, you can be sure of a memorable vacation. Whether for historic sightseeing, beachside relaxation, world-class snorkelling or even spring-break debauchery, the state of Quintana Roo beckons. ■

#### On the web

**Cancun Visitors & Convention Bureau**  
[cancun.travel](http://cancun.travel)  
**Tulum**  
[tulum.com](http://tulum.com)

# Puerto Vallarta

Enjoy beaches and gay nightlife, but beware of the chupacabra

STEVEN BEREZNAI

“The guys who checked in today both came single last year,” says Logan Miller, chief concierge at the gay boutique hotel Casa Cupula in Puerto Vallarta. “They met at one of our cocktail parties, and long story short, they’re back this year celebrating their one-year anniversary with sailing tours, champagne and chocolate-covered strawberries.”

True love is alive and well in Mexico’s de facto gay capital, but Puerto Vallarta’s not just for husband hunting (though I have it on good authority that one can easily make new friends while bobbing in the waves at the gay beach just four blocks from Casa Cupula. It’s a \$3 cab ride, though most people prefer to “walk off” their meals).

Like everyone I’ve spoken to who’s made “Puerto Gayarta” home, Miller raves about PV. “This is a year-round, full-service beach. You don’t have to sneak around with a cooler, and there’s no other tropical gay beach destination in North America.”

While Miller’s sassy enthusiasm makes him the Laverne of Casa Cupula (he’s the one who named their diet margarita The Skinny Bitch), the hotel’s owner, Donald Pickens, is the pragmatic Shirley. He opened the hotel as a five-room guesthouse in 2002. Over the years he’s added three more buildings, for a total of 21 rooms.

Pickens came to PV from the US to “chill” after the company he was working for “put me out to pasture... after the tech market crashed. I decided to buy and renovate.”

He’s become passionately enmeshed in the community and the country. He points out that gains in gay rights in Mexico, such as the legalization of same-sex marriage and adoption in Mexico City, are built on constitutional reforms instituted back in 1917, following the Mexican Revolution.

“Mexico was so Catholic, and the church was so powerful [and often corrupt],” he says, “they separated church and state.” The reforms include



The Gay Vallarta Bar-Hopping tours, which start with dinner at a restaurant, feature strippers and drag queens. PUERTO VALLARTA TOURISM BOARD

anti-clerical articles and a prohibition against creating a list of banned books. That provided the legal foundation for today’s gains, but socially, Puerto Vallarta’s uniquely gay identity heralds back to a Tinsel Town scandal.

“Puerto Vallarta got on the American map in the 1960s when Elizabeth Taylor came with Richard Burton [when he was filming *Night of the Iguana*], and they brought the Hollywood magic with them,” Pickens explains. They’d already caught the world’s imagination, starting an affair on the set of *Cleopatra*, both of them married — and not to each other. They later bought a villa in PV and would bring their entourages to the city. Taylor, especially, was “friends with a number of gay people in Hollywood — Montgomery Cliff, Rock Hudson.”

And so PV got a huge boost as a tourist and gay destination.

“Puerto Vallarta used to be called the San Fran of Mexico, because if you were gay in Mexico you could come here to be out... Now the city’s coming out with a marketing campaign that’s beyond gay-friendly,” Pickens says. The city celebrated its first Pride and a new Flower Festival in May of 2013, both efforts to extend the tourist season beyond its November–April window.

I confess that when I first arrived in the city in early May, I found myself wondering about the timing of the trip. After all, the weather at home was finally warming up, so was this really the time for a tropical destination? As I collapsed into bed at midnight, having just arrived at the CasaMagna Marriott from the airport, I found my ears teased by a strange sound. I popped out of bed with a huge grin. It was the ocean. I rushed to the balcony, threw open the curtains and stared out at the waves, listening to them crash over the sand.

Any doubts I had about the timing of my trip evaporated. This was way better than Canada in May.

## Where to stay

For those looking for a boutique experience with a gay flair, Casa Cupula is the obvious choice. “Every room is different,” Pickens says. “It was a pain in the ass, but it was worth it. It looks beautiful.” Where some places distinguish between ocean or non-ocean rooms, Cupula’s guests can get fussy over whether they are in the “the Orange Room or the Black and White Room... Here, there’s a lot more detail.” That includes adapting to the gay clock. “Everyone likes to go out late at night.

We don’t have an early end to breakfast. Technically, it’s at 11:30am, but if you roll out of bed at noon and want eggs, we’ll make you eggs.” If you’re looking for a resort experience and don’t mind being a taxi ride out of town (and from the gay bars), the CasaMagna Marriott provides a lovely stay right on the beach, with a great buffet breakfast, helpful staff, huge pool with swim-up bar and a turtle sanctuary.

## Where to eat

To get a lay of the gustatory land, I recommend taking advantage of Vallarta Food Tours. With eight different stops, you will get an authentic PV experience, from Mole Rosa (*mole* is an Aztec word that means to grind and mix), to the best taco stands in the city. (Hint: if a taco stand offers more than two types of meat, move on. The best ones have only one or two options, they cook it fresh, and when it runs out, they shut down for the day. Recipes are often handed down from generation to generation.)

## Where to drink

A full belly needs a wet palate, and nobody knows Puerto Vallarta’s hopping gay bar scene like Christian Serrano and

his Gay Vallarta Bar-Hopping Tour. He originally came to PV for two weeks, fell in love with the city and “told my mom send me all my clothes. That was seven and a half years ago.” Dinner, drinks and shots are all included for \$75–125 (depends on the night, the itinerary and the number/types of drinks/shots in the program). The tour starts with dinner at a restaurant so people can get to know each other (“I see those people hanging out with each other for the rest of their trip,” Serrano says), and on a typical night this is followed by three bars, one stripper bar and two nightclubs. “There’s never a cover charge; you never wait in line, and it can normally be an hour wait in high season” to get into a club. On some occasions, Serrano will also have special hosts, like a stripper at each location or a pornstar or drag sensation, possibly Canadian treasure Miss Conception, who’s known to spend her winters in PV. My favourite stops include the funky Reinas bar, with its kitschy makeup station and walls adorned with wigs, funky sunglasses and lady hats where you can “completely drag out.” My number-two choice is strip bar Wet, where two of Serrano’s “very cute” clients once got into the shower stall and put on a naked show of their own.

## Where to escape

If you want to get away from the beach (but not the booze), take a drive into the mountains to enjoy the Vallarta Botanical Gardens. A haven for indigenous orchids (they have dozens of species), this former cattle ranch was converted seven years ago into a botanical retreat. You can stick to the gardens or follow the old cow trails into the forests of the surrounding conservation area, down into a valley with a river full of swimming holes. (“No crocodiles,” I’m assured.) Bring a swimsuit and towel. There are five trails, each taking 40 to 80 minutes to traverse. Stay for a delicious meal, and for a margarita with an extra kick, order a *chupacabra*, which is made with tequila and *raicilla*. What’s *raicilla*? My guide laughs: “It’s basically moonshine” and is local to PV, so you won’t find it in other parts of Mexico. The *chupacabra* is delicious and has me tipsy after only a few sips. ■

For web links to places of interest, read this story online at [dailyxtratravel.com](http://dailyxtratravel.com). For the most up-to-date travel information on gay Puerto Vallarta, see our city, listings, events and activities guides at [dailyxtratravel.com](http://dailyxtratravel.com).

## On the web

More on gay Puerto Vallarta  
[visitpuertovallarta.com/services/gay-pv](http://visitpuertovallarta.com/services/gay-pv)  
Bar-hopping  
[gayvallartabarhopping.com](http://gayvallartabarhopping.com)  
Food tours  
[vallartafoodtours.com](http://vallartafoodtours.com)

# French Philly

## Viewing the city of Philadelphia through a Parisian art filter

PHIL VILLENEUVE

One of the best things about Philadelphia is that it's a city that can be approached from many different angles.

Whether it be a gay party weekend, a historical discovery week or the ultimate art tour, Philly has a lot to offer. Though all approaches are entertaining in their own way, we highly recommend the latter, since the city's art scene, with its solid base of museums, galleries and citywide art projects, is thriving.

Whether it's because of its proximity to New York (just one hour and 11 minutes on the Amtrak train), the cheap rents or the Percent for Art program (which they take very seriously), Philly's art world is bursting at the seams — literally. The city is home to one of the largest collections of outdoor art in North America, and its core is known as the Museum without Walls.

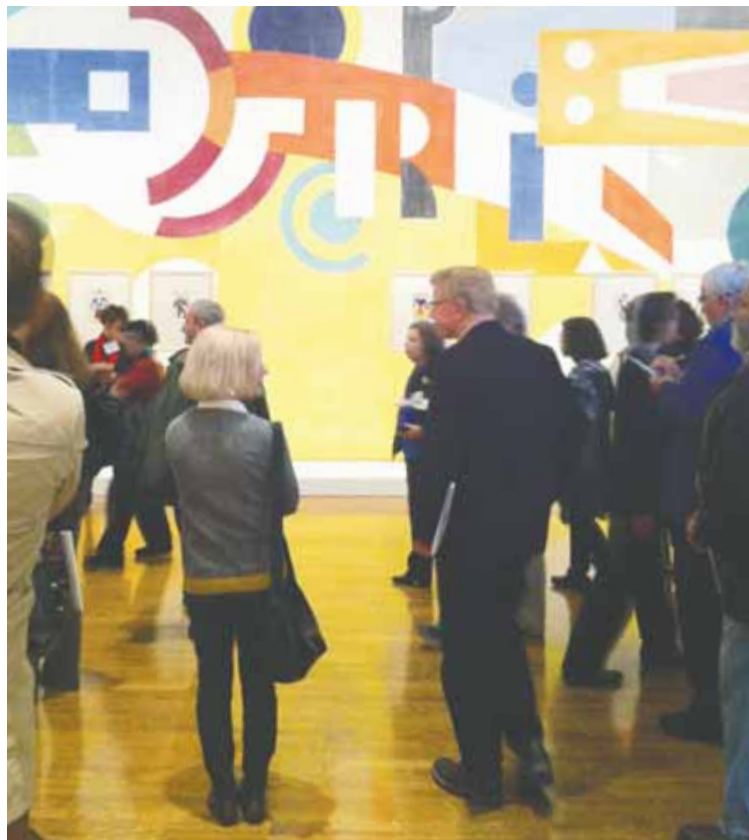
It's hard to know where to begin, there's so much going on. Start by visiting a variety of artsy venues, including the Fabric Workshop and Museum, a super-cool contemporary factory building filled with textiles you never imagined possible; the Mummies Museum (its New Year's Day Mummies parade and party is the oldest in the US); the Pennsylvania Academy of the Fine Arts, which features a Kaws exhibit until August 2014; and the creepy Mütter Museum, which puts medical history and all its mishaps on display.

At this point you might want to narrow your focus; we recommend giving a French twist to the rest of your *séjour*.

Start by booking a room at the luxurious Sofitel. Located in the heart of the French Quarter, it's close to everything, and its cuisine and décor have an authentic Parisian vibe.

Once you've relaxed with some champagne in the lounge, head to Zinc for dinner. This French bistro is named for the stunning zinc bar that was imported from France and takes centre stage in the adorable resto. It's easy to lose oneself in the ambiance (and the escargot shells) when dining here.

The next day, go directly to the Museum of Modern Art. (Be sure to walk; Philly's parks, fountains, outdoor art, murals and gardens make a stroll to the museum an adventure in itself.) You can't miss the palatial building, as the front steps were once climbed by



Top, the Fernand Léger exhibit at the Philadelphia Museum of Art. Above, a Jerry Seinfeld textile created at the Fabric Workshop and Museum. Above right, a wall of strategically placed clutter in the Barnes collection. PHIL VILLENEUVE




MY  
Montreal

## COLONIAL BATHS

*From favourite events to hidden gems off the beaten path, My Montreal gets the inside scoop from locals on what not to miss when visiting the city. In this installment, we asked author and activist Ryan Conrad to name a favourite city haunt.*

**"Bain Colonial [3963 Ave Coloniale] is one of Montreal's oldest saunas and sits on a quiet residential corner in Plateau**

**Mont-Royal. Being outside the gaybourhood means the clientele is a mixed crowd (Jews, Russians, gays), so the social scene is fascinating to watch. The steam is super hot and the rooftop terrace, delightfully cool. Tuesday nights bring in a flirtatious crowd of students every week — not to be missed!"**

 Check out other recommendations in the My Montreal series on [dailyxtratravel.com](http://dailyxtratravel.com).



Rocky in his big movie debut, which you might have seen.

If you get to the city before Jan 5, do not miss the interdisciplinary *Léger: Modern Art and the Metropolis* exhibit, which looks at the period in the 1920s when this French modernist, creator of the modern-day poster, used painting, film and music to engage with his home city of Paris.

From here skip over to the Rodin Museum. To enter, one must walk past *The*

*Thinker*, then head through the *Gates of Hell*. So dark. So stunning. So French!

Take a break at Joe Coffee, just off Rittenhouse Square, for one of the best coffees in the city.

Next, head to the famous Barnes collection. Relocated from the original Albert Barnes house (he was a collector who wanted to make art accessible to everyone), this museum is gorgeous, and it houses 181 Renoirs, 69 Cézannes and 59 Matisse.

If you haven't overdosed on French impressionist, post-impressionist and early-modern art and can handle just a little more French, finish off the day with dinner at Parc Brasserie. Its charming location on the corner of Rittenhouse Square is the perfect place to people watch and warm up with some French onion soup. I recommend the trout amandine with a side of frites. A couple bottles of wine won't hurt either.

Philadelphia is constantly reinventing itself. I'll definitely be heading back in April to see the Museum of Art's Patrick Kelly retrospective, *Runway of Love* — Philly through the eyes of high fashion. Sounds fun to me!

*The Fernand Léger exhibit runs until Sun, Jan 5 at the Philadelphia Museum of Art, 2600 Benjamin Franklin Pkwy.*

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### MILTON SMITH, Richard

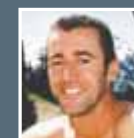
May 20, 1960 – November 30, 2013



"Ricky" Smith (pictured on our  
wedding day) died peacefully  
in Sechelt with his spouse Nick  
Tattersall beside him. His joyful soul  
will live on in each of us. Our gratitude  
to those who love Rick; friends and  
family are treasures. You know who  
you are - too many to mention!  
Thanks to the nurses and caregivers  
everywhere. Rick was predeceased by  
his father, Derrill F. Smith. He would  
appreciate donations to the SPCA. "A  
friend is one who knows you and loves  
you just the same." E. Hubbard

### Dearest Friend

Wherever I go,  
Whatever I do,  
Memories keep us near



Can't believe 10 years has passed -  
miss your smile and that stupid truck.

Love,  
Rod

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### LESSONS



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SO MUCH AS GETTING ERECTIONS  
SO HARD THAT I CAN FEEL MY  
PULSE IN THEM...

LOVE CAN TAKE A  
FLYING FUCK AT A  
ROLLING COCK RING.

DON'T MAKE ME GET  
THE STROBE LIGHT.

I MIGHT WALK 'ROUND PISSED  
AN' FRUSTRATED AT HOW  
THINGS ARE - BUT  
AT LEAST I KNOW  
I'LL END UP  
ON TH' RIGHT  
SIDE O'  
HIST'RY!

Y'KNOW TH' NATURAL WORLD'S  
IN TROUBLE WHEN EVEN TH'  
STARS ARE DIMMER THAN TH'  
ONES SEEN BY OUR FATHERS...

WHAT HAUNTS ME IS IF  
GAY IS A CHOICE, THEN WHY  
WOULD OUR LORD CREATE  
HERMAPHRODITES??

I WAS TH' TOWN'S  
HAPPIEST GAY WHEN I  
WAS FULL OF YOUR DNA.

SEEN' YA SIT ON M'FOOT  
WAS LIKE WATCHIN' A  
SEAGULL SWALLOW A  
STARFISH...

YOU CAN LEAD A TWINK  
TO CULTURE, BUT YOU  
CAN'T MAKE HIM THINK!

WE ENJOY  
DESIGNER JEANS,  
DESIGNER DRUGS,  
BOUTIQUE DINERS...

AND OTHER  
DIVERSIONS OF  
THE HOMOSEXUAL,  
MONEYED, AND  
IDLE.

LET'S  
SHARE A  
RIBCAGE.

I DIDN'T ROLL  
MY EYES, I JUST...  
BROUGHT THEM UP!

SMARTPHONES  
MURDERED  
DAYDREAMING.

HONEY-BADGER, YER A  
LIL' CRAZY, SO YA NEED  
SOM'ONE WHO'S SANE.

XXX?  
TH' SPIRIT IS WILLIN',  
BUT TH' FLESH IS STONED.

I KEEP FINDING MYSELF  
CRUISING THESE HUNKS, AND  
THEN REALIZING THEY'RE JUST  
TWINKS THAT GREW BEARDS!

WHAT?! I NEED  
SADDAM HUSSEIN??

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