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FROM THE EDITOR



Queer Content, On Demand

We've always believed that queer storytelling should be accessible, dynamic, and right at your fingertips—which is why **YOUR EX** and our website yourex.co.nz are free for everyone. This month, we're launching a new look for our website, optimised perfectly for reading on your phone. Whether you're scrolling on your morning commute or lounging in bed, it's never been easier to dive into everything we offer.

From yourex.co.nz, you can download the full digital magazine for free, sign up for our weekly EDM (packed with fresh stories and events), and enter all our latest giveaways. There are new articles every day, so think of it as your go-to home for the content you already love, but even more immediate, diverse and interactive.

So bookmark us, share us, and keep checking back. We're always on, always evolving—and always here to celebrate our community's stories.

Olly & Matt



COVER | **CELEBRATING 20 YEARS OF FAMILY BAR**
BY JOEL AMORES
VARIOUS PHOTOGRAPHERS

YOUR ex

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FROM PRISCILLA TO PICASSO: AUCKLAND'S SEASON OF STYLE, STAGE AND CULTURE

There's something about Auckland in winter. Maybe it's the long twilight evenings over the harbour, the moody light in the art galleries, or the way the city pulses with culture while other destinations start to hibernate. With a stacked calendar of shows, exhibitions and places to wine, dine and stay out late, Tāmaki Makaurau is proving once again it's the city that doesn't dim when the temperature drops.

For the rainbow community, Auckland isn't just open this winter, it's turning it on. The city is buzzing with energy, creativity and just the right amount of chaos. From the boutiques of Britomart to the grit and glamour of Karangahape Road, everything feels close, connected and alive. One moment you're in front of a Monet, the next you're sipping cocktails with a view or catching a standing ovation at The Civic. It's a season made for spontaneous plans, late nights and full cultural immersion, served with just the right splash of drama.

PRISCILLA TAKES CENTRE STAGE

The Civic comes alive this September with *Priscilla Queen of the Desert*. Running 12 September to 4 October, this beloved musical based on the Oscar-winning film is equal parts heartfelt and high camp. Expect a dazzling array of costumes, an avalanche of dancefloor anthems, and a starring turn from local drag icon Anita Wigl'it. Whether it's your first time or your fifteenth, this glitter-drenched road trip is a must-see.

A show this big deserves a proper night out. Book into nearby Cordis Auckland, known for its indulgent high teas and plush decor, or Four Points by Sheraton, whose rooftop gin bar is made for a golden hour pre-show drink. Both hotels are perfectly placed for the theatre, the Auckland Art Gallery and the city's key cultural hotspots.

CULTURE WITH A TWIST

Just a few minutes' walk from The Civic, Auckland Art Gallery Toi o Tāmaki continues



Priscilla Queen of the Desert the musical

to impress with A Century of Modern Art, on until 28 September. With works by Cézanne, Monet, Picasso and more, it's an extraordinary chance to see some of the world's greatest artists in conversation with one another and with the city outside its grand windows.

For a single night of beauty, rhythm and grace, mark 29 August on your calendar. That's when the Ballet International Gala VI takes over The Civic for one glittering evening of classical and contemporary works performed by some of ballet's biggest global stars. Whether you're a purist or a casual admirer, it's a spectacle worth dressing up for.

DIVA ENERGY

No trip to Auckland is complete without a visit to the Auckland War Memorial Museum, and

DISCOVER AUCKLAND × YOUR EX



Auckland Museum proudly presents DIVA

the DIVA exhibition on now through 19 October gives you every reason to go. This dazzling tribute celebrates the powerhouses of music, performance and pop culture who've changed the world, from gender-defying legends to voice-of-a-generation icons. It's a reminder that behind every era-defining outfit and high note is a diva who made her mark.

To continue the diva fantasy in real life, base yourself at SO/ Auckland or QT Auckland, two of the city's most stylish stays. Both sit moments from the waterfront and Britomart's design district, offering luxurious rooms, indulgent dining and rooftop bars with sweeping views of the Waitematā. Whether you start your night with a spritz at HI-SO or end it on the terrace at QT's Rooftop, these hotels keep your glamour levels high from check-in to check-out.

SATISFY EVERY CRAVING

Auckland's food scene thrives in winter. Whether you're grabbing something casual between gallery visits or looking to impress on date night, the city's culinary offering is diverse and delicious. Pie Rolla on Karangahape Road is an institution, famous for its hearty fillings, flaky pastry and ability to cure anything, be



Bar Magda, one of Auckland's Iconic Eats

The Churchill rooftop bar at Four Points by Sheraton

it hangovers or hunger pangs. There's also a second outpost tucked into Osborne Lane in Newmarket, ideal for a post-shop bite — just steps from Westfield Newmarket.

For something more refined, Atelier serves elegant French tapas in a moody, artful space on K Road. By day, Fort Greene just up the street offers some of the city's best sandwiches, made with house-baked breads and seasonal ingredients that go far beyond your average deli. And when the sun goes down, Queens Rooftop at Commercial Bay is where you want to be — with some of the best harbour views in the city, this is one of the places to be. Expect standout cocktails, a lively crowd, and a setting that turns any evening into an occasion.

Looking for more inspiration? Head to Auckland Iconic Eats at iconiceats.co.nz for a curated guide to the 100 most-loved dishes in the city, as voted by the public. From low-key brunch favourites to high-end icons, the list is a goldmine of local flavour.

K ROAD AND THE CIVIC: AUCKLAND'S CULTURAL CORE

If you haven't walked the length of Karangahape Road lately, you're missing one of the most



QT Auckland



SO/ Auckland lobby

proudly queer, constantly evolving and artistically rich streets in the country. K Road is home to drag institutions like Caluzzi, vintage shops that double as performance spaces, and cocktail bars with names you won't remember but nights you won't forget. Just a short walk away, The Civic rises like a temple of old-world glamour, its interior glowing with golden chandeliers and a famously star-studded ceiling.

If those walls could talk, they'd tell stories of showgirls, jazz musicians, film premieres and generations of Aucklanders falling in love with performance. And thanks to The Civic Tours, you can get a rare glimpse behind the curtain. Running regularly throughout the season, these tours reveal the theatre's nearly 100-year history, from its 1920s origins through to its 90s restoration. It's a journey rich with nostalgia and magic.

MAKE IT A MOMENT

Winter is when Auckland comes into its own. It's the perfect blend of sophistication and soul, where you can spend your morning in front of a Monet, your afternoon shopping at Westfield Newmarket and your evening at the theatre or out on the town.

Whether you're here for the culture, the fashion, the food or just a bit of well-deserved indulgence, this is the season to say yes to it all. From the glitter of Priscilla to the brushstrokes of Picasso, from diva worship to rooftop rendezvous, Auckland is showing off and it's looking right at you.

Discover everything Auckland has to offer this season at aucklandnz.com

FROM DEMON TWINK TO DRAG RACE WRITER: MARSHALL LORENZO WRAPS UP HIS TRILOGY

ARTICLE | OLIVER HALL

Comedian Marshall Lorenzo reflects on his sketch-comedy roots, writing for Canada's Drag Race, and the absurdity of capitalism.

Two decades after penning cheeky op-eds for *YOUR EX*, Marshall Lorenzo is back, this time on the other side of the keyboard. Reflecting on those early days, the Kiwi comic doesn't hold back. "The absolute audacity! If I could bottle and sell the delusion of a demon twink with no boundaries, I would not still be renting in this post-John Key world," he says, laughing. "From what I remember, my columns were mainly advice on how to get free drinks from straight guys. Nothing's changed!"

Now, Lorenzo is wrapping up his sketch-show trilogy 'Baby Gorgeous' with *Decadunce*—a theatrical deep dive into fraud, excess and the ridiculousness of modern capitalism. Why frame his shows as a trilogy? "In my two previous shows, I hinted at the fall of capitalism. In this one, I've agreed to go down with the ship," he explains. "Like rehoming cleanskin wine into a Kim Crawford bottle or screaming at a Briscoes just to feel something."

Best known for his irreverent, sketch-based comedy, Lorenzo has long favoured the format over traditional stand-up. "It's just a more theatrical way to present jokes," he says. "Sketch allows you to package ideas in different ways—

internal monologues, villain characters, absurd premises. I love playing the villain. David Seymour, anyone?"

His time abroad sharpened his comedic skills. A graduate of the prestigious Second City Conservatory, Lorenzo led Canada's top sketch troupe and even made his mark writing for *Canada's Drag Race*. "Structure, structure, structure! That's the big takeaway," he says. "But the ability to pivot fast was the best lesson I got from *Drag Race*. Those jokes when they walk the runway? They're written live. I'd be hammering out punchlines into an earpiece as they hit the catwalk. SO fun."

Lorenzo was scouted for *Drag Race* after producers saw him performing at a weekly sketch show in Toronto where he was head writer. "It was kind of like *Saturday Night Live*," he recalls. "They saw me in a live pressure cooker."

And while he won't spill much tea without a drink in hand, he does offer a cryptic note: "There's a reason the acting challenges are so bad. But you'll have to buy me a drink for that story."

Decadunce also takes aim at the state of the world. "We're done. Cooked," Lorenzo says bluntly. "I absolutely see violence in my lifetime. We're talking about powerful people who were bullied in high school, exacting economic revenge on the population. But sure, let's keep politely asking billionaires to 'stop that'."

Despite the grim themes, audiences have responded enthusiastically across international Fringe festivals. "Kiwi crowds are either super polite or totally devoid of boundaries—there's no in-between," he laughs. "Even Canadians are flirtier after a show. Come on Auckland!"

So what's next for the comic after his final Baby Gorgeous course? "I'm quitting to become a turnip farmer," Lorenzo deadpans. "You'll find me homed up in Cambridge with a small Lutheran woman named Myrtle. Or most wanted in a Westmere Facebook group—I haven't decided yet."

'Decadunce' will be performed at Auckland's Basement Theatre from 21 to 23 August. Tickets from basementtheatre.co.nz



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THE BAR THAT CHANGED AUCKLAND: FAMILY CELEBRATES 20 YEARS

*In 2005, Auckland's LGBTQ+ nightlife was stuck in a revolving door: bars opened, crowds flocked to the newest spot—and then just as quickly, they closed. It was rare, before **Family Bar** launched on Karangahape Road, for a gay bar to survive more than two years. But Wayne Clark's bold, warehouse-style venue changed everything. Two decades on, Family stands as New Zealand's longest-running gay bar—bold, thriving, iconic.*

FROM G.A.Y. TO FAMILY

Wayne Clark had experimented before Family. He launched G.A.Y. in downtown Auckland in 1999, which lasted until 2002. That was followed by The Wonder Bar on O'Connell Street (18 months) and the short-lived Splash, which Clark calls a "disaster". "Nothing compared to Family," he says proudly.

THE TURNING POINT

Clark credits much of Family's success to his decision to place drag queen Miss Ribena at the door. She's greeted incoming crowds for nearly all 20 years. As Clark noted, around 12 gay bars have opened and closed in Auckland during that time, yet Family endured.

CONSTANT REINVENTION

Family started as a single-level club with lofty warehouse ceilings—a look inspired by trips to Europe. Over time Clark added more: underground club Down Under club and adjacent br Queen, Karaoke bar Saloon and a secret outdoor Garden Bar at the rear. It's now



five bars in one: spaces for drag shows, DJs, karaoke, dancefloors with different styles of music, chill-out zones (both in and outdoors). That variety keeps things fresh. As Wayne says, "there's always something new going on."

INCLUSIVE BY DESIGN

From day one, Family welcomed everyone—gay, lesbian, bisexual, trans, non-binary. But as straight patrons began to cotton on to Family being Auckland's most exciting venue, Wayne

launched G.A.Y. Auckland just a couple of door down the road, offering a more explicitly queer venue, which has recently expanded to two levels including Pink Pony.

WEATHERING CHALLENGES

The global pandemic tested Family's resilience, with lockdowns and spacing rules. Wayne said he was fortunate to have generous landlords who helped keep the venue afloat. Staff loyalty also proved essential: several team members had been with him since day one including: Ribena, Wazza, Grady, Washington.

PROUDEST MOMENTS

Wayne fondly recalls birthday celebrations packed with politicians, TV stars, musicians and fans. Julian Clary and Gok Wan attended the

ICONIC



tenth birthday, and every Auckland Pride queues to get in the club snake down K Road.

LOOKING FORWARD

Despite the tricky current hospitality climate, Family survives without regular cover charges. Wayne tells us, "People (especially students) have it hard enough finding the money to buy drinks... let alone pay at the door."

A LASTING LEGACY

In an industry known for its high turnover and fleeting trends, Family's 20-year milestone is more than just a business success—it's

a love letter to Auckland's queer community.

Whether it's a first kiss on the dancefloor, a karaoke duet at 2am, or a Pride party that spills into the street, Family is imprinted into the memory of generations. As Wayne reflects on two colourful decades, the name says it all: this bar is, and always has been, about chosen family.

Family Bar celebrates it's 20th Birthday from 6pm on Sunday 31 August at 270 Karagahape Road, Auckland. No cover charge.



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SIX FIERCE YEARS: G.A.Y'S BIRTHDAY BASH

On Saturday 9 August, G.A.Y Auckland is blowing out candles and getting extra wild! The iconic venue has levelled up, expanding from its beloved basement roots to include the chaotic, anything-goes energy of the Pink Pony upstairs. Throughout August, expect high camp and high glamour from hostesses Ieta Buffet and Natasha, while DJs Hamish, James, and the return of Motown icon Wanda will keep the dancefloor pumping into the early hours.





G.A.Y Auckland
Basement Level 262 Karangahape Road.
 PHOTOS | **JASMIN SHEIKH**



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TANGI UTIKERE: CELEBRATING DIVERSITY AND COMMUNITY IS ESSENTIAL

Palmerston North MP Tangi Utikere warns that Government reforms could threaten events like Palmy Drag Fest, which celebrate diversity and bring communities together.

As we head into the second half of 2025, there are some great community events to look forward to, including in my hometown of Palmerston North.

Festivals and events are incredibly important to our rainbow community, and an opportunity to celebrate the wonderfully diverse community we have here in Aotearoa New Zealand.

Palmy Drag Fest is no different. I'm proud to have been a strong supporter of this annual event for many years – it's a fantastic weekend of events, ending with New Zealand's biggest drag show, featuring an all-star line-up of drag royalty.

Last year, I was fortunate to be joined at Palmy Drag Fest by members of Labour's Rainbow Caucus, who came along to enjoy the festivities and show support for our LGBTQI+ community. This event is also well supported by Palmerston North City Council and the local Central Economic Development Agency (CEDA).



MP Tangi Utikere

However, the recent Government announcement around local government reform could indicate that events such as Palmy Drag Fest – events that promote

inclusivity and a sense of belonging – are not important to this Government.

Requiring local councils to focus only on what the Government calls “core services” may mean that local government support for events like this, that bring communities together and celebrate diversity, is firmly in the past.

Local government plays a pivotal role in both maximising economic development opportunities and bringing communities together.

Our councils do important work, representing and supporting communities at a local level. I'm incredibly fortunate to be part of a multicultural, diverse community where we acknowledge and celebrate those things that make us unique – as individuals, and as a community. Other towns and cities around New Zealand are no different in this regard either.

Our communities are about more than rates, rubbish, and roads. And it's our rainbow community, along with others, that will pay the price if the Government heads down that path.

Funded by Parliamentary Services and authorised by Tangi Utikere MP, Parliament Buildings, Wellington.

OUT & ABOUT

SPRING BECKONS AT EAGLE BAR

*Auckland's **Eagle Bar** is the perfect place to welcome the change in seasons. With its warm atmosphere, cheerful crowd, and eclectic jukebox, it's a favourite for both after-work catch-ups and weekend vibes. Order Eagle's notorious Long Island Iced Tea, choose your own tunes, and let this bar's infectious energy ease you into the new season.*



Eagle Bar
259 Karangahape Road, Auckland.
PHOTOS | JASMIN SHEIKH

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THE HOTTEST QUEER FILMS AT NZIFF 2025

NZIFF returns to screens around New Zealand from 31 July with one of its boldest queer line-ups yet. From internet sensations to hidden gems, these are the films everyone's going to be talking about.



TWINLESS

The film that broke Sundance, literally. A leaked gay sex scene starring Dylan O'Brien and writer-director James Sweeney lit up TikTok and forced the festival to pull it from online. Suddenly, everyone wanted to know what *Twinless* was about.

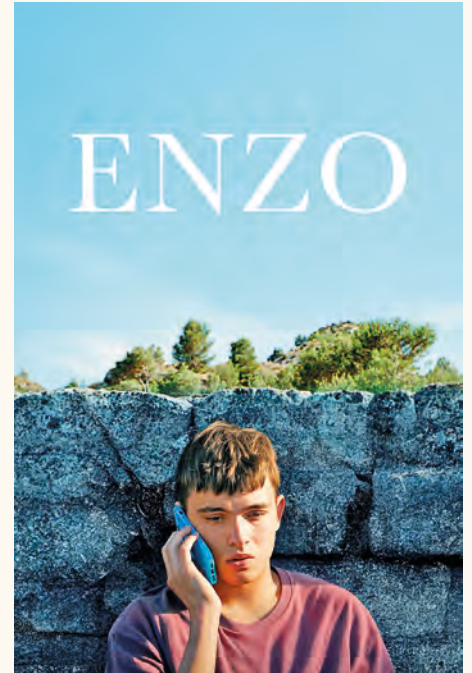
It starts as a deadpan comedy about twin grief, then spirals into something darker and more complex. O'Brien plays Roman, a grieving twin who meets Dennis in a support group, and what follows is a codependent, erotic mindfuck. The leak sold the fantasy; the film delivers something far stranger and more unforgettable.



LESBIAN SPACE PRINCESS

She's clingy, anxious, and the dumbest royal in Clitopolis, and now she has to save the galaxy. Dumped on her 23rd birthday, Princess Saira is forced to leave her queer utopia and face the dreaded Straight White Aliens to rescue her ex.

Lesbian Space Princess is a loud, proud, and gloriously chaotic animated romp through gay space and beyond. There are horny weapons, talking ships, and a kinky, heartfelt quest from two brilliant Aussie women who know what the girls want.



ENZO

It's *Call Me by Your Name* but with class tension, repression, and actual consequences. In the heat of the French summer, rich-kid Enzo tries to blend in on a building site, but the older workers see right through him - especially Vlad, a Ukrainian who barely speaks but sees everything.

Their slow-burn connection is all curiosity, contempt, and unspoken longing. When it finally erupts, it leaves both men exposed and nothing the same.



NIGHT STAGE

It starts with a hook-up and turns into something far more dangerous. Mathias is a fame-hungry theatre kid. Rafael is a closeted politician. What brings them back together isn't just chemistry, it's the thrill of risk: of being caught, of wanting too much.

Night Stage is a bold, horny thriller about sex, power, and performance. Public sex, bad decisions, and sweaty chaos collide in a story about the cost of playing it straight and what happens when someone makes you want to stop pretending.

NZIFF × YOUR EX



DREAMS (SEX LOVE)

Every lesbian's had a crush on a teacher. Johanne had one at 17, then wrote a memoir so intense her mum and grandma had to read it.

Dreams (Sex Love) follows Johanne's obsession with her French teacher, blurring fact and fantasy through voiceover and flashback. Her family reflects, too, adding tenderness and humour to this messy chronicle of first love. Late-night diary entries, burning glances, and that aching, all-consuming want.



BABY

Brazilian director Marcelo Caetano captures São Paulo from all angles in *Baby*, the tale of a tumultuous partnership in love and business between a young offender fresh out of youth detention, and an older sex worker with a side hustle in drug dealing and pick-pocketing.

PLAINCLOTHES

Tom Blyth is Lucas, a closeted rookie cop sent to cruise public toilets as part of a 1997 sting operation in upstate New York. Then he meets Andrew (Russell Tovey in full daddy mode), and the mission starts to unravel.



Shot in grainy 4:3 camcorder, *Plainclothes* feels illicit, sweaty, and wired with shame. Every look simmers with gay panic, and the tension threatens to tip into either sex or violence at any moment. It's tense, raw, and unforgettable.

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Cushla Matheson, instructor Hanshi Dennis May MNZM, Lexie Matheson & Finn Matheson

MUMSY AND ME: LEXIE AND FINN MATHESON

ARTICLE | OLIVER HALL

*At 55, **Lexie Matheson** decided to deny her identity no longer and begin transitioning, only to meet the love of her life who wanted to have a baby. Lexie and son Finn tell us about an unconventional family life that bred an international athlete with Olympic dreams.*

When Finn Matheson was a toddler, he devised a linguistic workaround to avoid confusing his two mums. “I said, okay, you’re Mum, and you’re Mumsy,” he recalls. “It’s just kind of stuck.” These days, the 22-year-old international archer and karate black belt occasionally swaps in “Lexie” for Mumsy, “especially if she’s having

a bit of a Deaf moment,” he jokes, but the sentiment holds. His family, unconventional by mainstream standards, is built on precision, love, and a deep sense of mutual respect.

Lexie Matheson, Finn’s biological parent and a trans woman, came out and began her transition at 55, the same year she met Cushla, a theatre-maker 30 years her junior. “I thought

I’d live the rest of my life alone,” Lexie tells me. “But of course, the universe had other plans.” The pair married and, on their wedding night, conceived Finn. “We wanted to be parents. And we agreed we’d stick together through anything.”

That resolve has seen them through decades of love, parenting, and navigating visibility as a queer family in Aotearoa. For Finn, growing up with two mums, one trans, never felt particularly unusual. “Other kids would ask, ‘What’s it like not having a dad?’” he says. “And I’d just say, ‘I don’t know. I’ve always had two mums. They love me. It’s never been a big deal.’”

There were challenges, of course. “I got teased a bit, but never really about my family,” Finn explains. “It was more typical kid stuff. And honestly, I think being raised in a rainbow family gave me a stronger sense of acceptance, of others and of myself.” One early experience stands out: a classmate who initially joined in on teasing suddenly shifted gears. “He found out I had two mums, turns out, he did too. From that day, he always stood up for me. We didn’t even talk about it, but we had that understanding.”

QUEER FAMILIES



PHOTO | DAVID EDMUNDSON

Lexie, an educator for over 60 years, had concerns about sending Finn into a school system that wasn't always kind to kids who stood out. "I knew it wouldn't be easy," she says. "We were visible. You can't exactly hide a trans woman and a lesbian mum at parents' night." But when four-year-old Finn toured local schools and picked King's in Remuera, "because it had the best outdoor playground" - the family leaned in.

"We expected judgement," Lexie says. "Instead, the headmaster just sat down and played blocks with Finn. Two days later, we got a letter saying they wanted him. They saw him for who he was, and that made all the difference."

What emerged was a boy with a love of movement, discipline, and excellence. "He woke up one morning when he was five and said, 'I'm a ninja. Ninjas don't sleep, we just rest our eyes,'" Lexie recalls. Cushla found a local karate club called The Brat Pack, and the rest is martial arts history. Finn trained hard, eventually earning his black belt, and remains dedicated to karate today, though archery has taken centre stage.

Finn began archery in Year 7 and, over the last decade, has quietly become one of the best in the region. "It's a sport with no ambiguity," he says. "In karate, points can be debated. In archery, you either hit the target or you don't. I like that clarity." At the 2023 Oceania Championships, Finn competed in the open men's division, no longer classed as a youth, and took home one of each medal. "I got bronze in ranking, silver in individual match play, and our team won gold. The guy

who beat me for gold? An Olympic bronze medallist. So yeah, I was pretty stoked."

Finn was longlisted for both of the last two Olympics, an achievement Lexie is wildly proud of. "He's brilliant at it," she beams. "Junior World Champion, World Youth Championships, four Hyundai World Cups... I'm so proud. And all from this kid who picked his primary school for the playground."

Lexie herself has donned the silver fern as a team manager, and competed in three world karate championships, but her experiences in sport haven't always been inclusive. "Karate welcomed me," she says. "At one national camp, they tried to make me bunk with the men. The women stood up and said, 'She bunks with us.' That was massive, especially in a sport so hierarchical."

Archery, by contrast, has been tougher. "It's full of misogyny, and wherever there's misogyny, there's homophobia and transphobia too," she says. "The rules on inclusion exist, they just get ignored." Internationally, the outlook is mixed. "If Finn makes the Olympics, I won't be able to go unless the US changes its anti-trans policies. I'm not welcome there, all my documentation is marked F." The irony is bitter: a parent devoted to sport and family, banned from the very arena her child may rise in. "Meanwhile, we travel through the Middle East and they treat me with dignity and respect, go figure!"

Through all this, Lexie and Cushla have held to one principle: it's Finn's life, and he calls the shots. "Our job is to support him, guide him when needed, and love him unconditionally," Lexie says. "That's what parenting is."

But parenting as a rainbow family still comes with added layers. Lexie's advice for queer parents is rooted in both strategy and heart. "Be visible," she says. "Don't let shame dictate who shows up at school events. That visibility empowers your kid. And find allies, other parents, teachers, who get it."

Her second piece of advice? Get your kid some martial arts training. "A black belt never hurts," she deadpans.

Finn agrees. His advice for the next generation of rainbow kids? "Be unapologetically yourself. Even if it takes time, you'll find your people."

Lexie and Cushla also made a point of nurturing communication at home. "Finn could be monosyllabic at dinner," she laughs, "but bedtime? We had our best chats then, about life, science, the universe."

Lexie knows some rainbow couples who fear they're too old to have kids. Her response? "First and foremost, nothing beats being a parent. If you decide to do it, live every moment. Hug relentlessly. Love shamelessly. And talk, talk, talk."

She and Cushla made a promise early on: no matter what, they wouldn't break up. "We'd find a way to talk it through. And we have. Our marriage is like anyone else's, hard at times, joyful at others. But we never lost sight of the why."

Their journey is part love story, part survival manual, and part open letter to the future. A celebration of what's possible when queer families raise kids with intention, honesty, and karate-level determination. Whether or not Finn makes it to LA 2028, the legacy of this remarkable family is already gold.

*Galatos pulsed with energy on Saturday 12 July as **URGE** Events hosted its hottest Locker Room yet—a wild, sweaty fundraiser for the NZ Falcons gay and inclusive rugby team ahead of this September's Purchas Cup. With DJs Ryan Bourne and Torrance, fierce drag, and sizzling go-go action, the night was pure celebration, of sport, sexiness, and queer community.*



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Glowing With Confidence

Angus McDougall's top picks and tips for looking your best in the lead-up to spring.



@angusmcdougallnz

As we ease into late winter with brighter mornings and the promise of spring just ahead, it's the perfect moment to reset your beauty routine and refresh your wardrobe. This month's edit is all about smart upgrades that feel effortless but make a big impact. Whether you're shopping sales or dressing with more intention, these are the tools and ideas that will help you look and feel your best.

SKIN TINTS: NATURAL, POLISHED, YOU

A good skin tint gives that "I woke up like this" radiance while quietly doing the work underneath. *M.A.C. Strobe Dewy Skin Tint* is a sheer, hydrating wonder that blurs and boosts with every wear. Packed with hyaluronic acid, shea butter, squalane and vitamin E, it feels like skincare with just the right amount of glow (\$77 for 30ml). Available at Farmers and MAC.

If you prefer a formula with SPF built in, the *Bobbi Brown Vitamin Enriched Skin Tinted Moisturiser SPF 15* is a beautiful 2-in-1. Light coverage, a healthy finish and infused with vitamins for a nourished, naturally polished complexion (\$88). Available at Farmers.

And for those who like a little more lift while keeping things fresh, the *Elizabeth Arden Ceramide Lift and Firm Makeup SPF 15 PA++* offers creamy, medium coverage with added anti-ageing technology. Skin looks firm, dewy and smooth with a finish that flatters mature skin (\$88). Available at Elizabeth Arden counters.



HAIR GROWTH, BUT MAKE IT STYLISH

Hair thinning and loss is one of the most common concerns among men—and it can have a real impact on confidence. *Bouf*, pronounced "boof", is a new player in the haircare space that's taking the issue seriously, with science-backed solutions that don't break the bank. The star of the range is the Flouf Factor Growth Tonic, a concentrated leave-in formula powered by FGF5-blocking technology.

The tonic is supported by a shampoo, conditioner and leave-in mask that help strengthen strands and prevent breakage (\$40 for the tonic). Available at bouf.com and Farmers.



FRAGRANCE THAT SMELLS LIKE MONEY

White Tea Eau Lilac by Elizabeth Arden is the kind of fragrance that tricks everyone into thinking you spent a lot more than you did. With notes of Italian mandarin, jasmine sambac, French lilac and white woods, it's crisp, fresh, quietly sensual (\$57 for 30ml or \$110 for 100ml). Available at Farmers, Ballantynes and Green Cross Health.

TOOL YOU DIDN'T KNOW YOU NEEDED

I have long arms. I still can't tan the middle of my back. Enter this genius tool: the *Bondi Sands Back Applicator*, which makes fake tanning stress-free and streak-free (\$18). Available at Chemist Warehouse.

YOUR STYLE, YOUR RULES

Angus McDougall's guide to the smart way to shop sales!

Here's a tip I live by. Add your favourite pieces to wishlists at sites based in the opposite hemisphere. Think ASOS, SSENSE or MR PORTER. While we head into summer, they're clearing theirs out. That means swimwear, linen shirts, resort sets and sandals go on major markdown—often up to 80 percent. You'll be stocked before the season even hits, with pieces you actually want. Not just the dregs of a Boxing Day rack. Add to this the benefit of buying from global retailers—often you'll find pieces that aren't widely available here, giving your wardrobe that extra edge.

Wear your best pieces, now

One of my favourite quotes is by Harry Winston—"Everybody will stare, make it worth their while." It's a reminder I come back to often. Style is theatre, and the world is your audience, whether you're running errands or

heading to a dinner. Too many people save their favourite things for a mythical future event. Stop waiting. Wear the jacket that makes you feel unstoppable. Pull out the shoes that always earn a compliment. Life happens in the everyday—so dress like it matters. Looking good isn't about vanity. It's about showing up for yourself. You move differently when you know you look sharp. Confidence isn't something you find. It's something you wear.

Confidence comes when you feel like you

Style is deeply personal. Whether you're a minimalist in clean monochrome, a streetwear head in oversized cuts and graphic sneakers, or a vintage hunter mixing eras like a pro—own it. The key is authenticity. When you're dressing like yourself and not the algorithm, people feel it. Your energy shifts. Your presence sharpens. That's the difference between wearing clothes and having style.

Make dressing your daily ritual

Clothing sets the tone. That morning moment when you pull together an outfit isn't superficial—it's strategic. It's a chance to remind yourself who you are, or who you want to be today. A crisp shirt, a perfect trouser, a fresh pair of kicks—it's armour and expression rolled into one. So curate your wardrobe like it matters. Because it does.

Know your tailor, know your shape

If you're investing in great clothes, make sure they fit you properly. Even off-the-rack pieces can look made-to-measure with a little tailoring. Shorten the sleeve, take in the waist, taper the leg—these tweaks elevate a look instantly. A good local tailor is worth their weight in gold and will help your clothes work harder for you.

Buy in outfits, not pieces

Impulse buys can be fun, but smart fashion means thinking in full looks. Before buying



anything new, ask yourself what you'll wear it with. If it doesn't go with at least three things already in your wardrobe, leave it. Building outfits around pieces you already love keeps your style cohesive and cuts down on that dreaded "I have nothing to wear" moment.

Elevate the basics

White T-shirts, quality socks, good underwear—these unsung heroes form the foundation of every outfit. Don't skimp here. When your basics are fresh, soft and well-made, they support everything layered over the top. Great style starts underneath.

Statement accessories are your shortcut

When in doubt, add one strong accessory. A watch with weight. A well-made belt. A chain or signet ring. Sunglasses that make people pause. Accessories give personality and punch to even the simplest outfit. They also transition a look from day to night without needing a full change.

Be a repeater, but switch it up

Outfit repeating is not a crime—it's the mark of a well-curated wardrobe. The trick is in the styling. Switch up your footwear, layer with a jacket, roll the sleeves, add a bold sock. Small changes keep your favourites feeling fresh.



MUSIC



PHOTO | FREDRIK HVASS

THE MAGIC OF AGNES

*The Swedish pop visionary speaks to **Oliver Hall** about queer connection, disappearing to find yourself, and turning milk into money!*

"I t's summer, but it's rainy, stormy and so dramatic," Agnes laughs, turning her laptop to show the view from Gotland, the Swedish island she now calls home. "Yesterday, it was beautiful, but something happened during the night."

Something happening overnight feels like a pretty apt metaphor for Agnes's artistic evolution. The former teen pop prodigy, who rose to international fame with the 2009 smash *Release Me*, has spent the last few years quietly transforming her creative process, her sound, and her sense of self. And the result? A new chapter rooted in freedom, honesty and joy.

Her 2021 album *Magic Still Exists* arrived like a spell: disco-drenched and spiritual, full of shimmering synths and interludes that felt like whispers from the cosmos. Now, she's ushering in a bold new era, with the punchy new singles *Milk* and *Balenciaga Covered Eyes*—and she's doing it her way.

A QUEER CONNECTION

Agnes doesn't try to guess why queer audiences love her. "It's always hard to talk about yourself from that perspective," but she has a hunch. "Since I was a child, I was inspired by these big pop divas and disco queens," she says. "For me, being an artist is so much more than just making music. I love to think about visually what I want to do. In a way, creating a universe."

That dedication to world-building, she thinks, is part of what resonates. "Since I was a child, I've always been asking myself: Who am I? Who do I want to be? Reinventing myself. Not being down with other people telling me who I am and what I should do. I think people from the

LGBTQI+ community connect with this, and all of these thoughts and questions go into my music."

And maybe that's why it's never felt like just pop. Agnes's music is pop with purpose.

A BREAK TO BUILD SOMETHING BIGGER

Agnes stepped away from the public eye for four years before creating *Magic Still Exists*, and says that decision wasn't scary—it was necessary.

"There was no fear," she says firmly. "It was such a strong feeling that I needed to take this time to get to know myself as an artist, and as a songwriter. I had a bigger fear of making music and not having anything to say."

She started learning music production basics, giving herself total independence for the first time in her career. "If I had an idea, I could walk into the studio and make it," she says. "I spent so much time just making songs and writing. It was such a healing process."

That time taught her what she needs to thrive creatively, and that you don't always need to rush. "Do less and do it from your heart," she says now. "Some songs go very quickly, and some things take time."

DISCO WAS HER LIGHT IN THE PANDEMIC

When Agnes began creating *Magic Still Exists* during the pandemic, she was in a fog of self-doubt and anxiety. "I wanted to make music that makes me feel lighter, happier," she recalls. "Disco, for me, is that light in the tunnel."

The resulting record, which Agnes calls her 'first album' in a spiritual sense, was a full-body act of self-expression. "I put my life, heart, time; my everything into it," she says. "For the first time in my career, I had a really clear vision of what I wanted to do."

She was proud of it—still is—but never assumed others would get it. "You never know," she says. "You can have all these ideas and not know if people are going to resonate with it or not." When *The Guardian*, *Pitchfork* and others

named it among the best albums of 2021, it felt 'magical'.

TURNING MILK INTO BUTTER, AND BUTTER INTO MONEY

Agnes's new single *Milk* is a punchy affirmation of personal power—and it started as a chant in the car. "I remember I was driving, and the chant was on a loop: I turn milk into butter and butter into money, and the money honey, I create the life that I like," she recalls.

She credits Swedish punk band The Hives for unlocking it. "I started to sing the *milk* lyrics on top of one of their songs," she says. "Then we started to create this kind of rock punk version, but something wasn't quite right. So we brought in some disco, and everything just fell into place."

She describes the song as a "state of self-confidence. Knowing who you are, where you want to go, and not caring about anything else."

FROM SILHOUETTES TO SKIN

Visually, Agnes has always brought high fashion and mystique to her projects. But for this new era, she's shifting. "With *Magic Still Exists*, I was very focused on having a strong silhouette," she explains. "Minimalistic, but maximalistic minimalism," she laughs.

Now, she wants to feel freer in her body. "I still love strong silhouettes, but I knew with the new album, I wanted to come more closer to the skin. I knew I wanted to move more, and that's pretty hard when you're in this armour."

And she's soaking up inspiration everywhere: "Watching runways, films, documentaries, going to museums, looking at sculptures, picking out details from everywhere and blending them together."

THE FEELING OF COMING HOME

Agnes lights up when she talks about performing at Pride events across Europe. "When the crowd is queer, there's a feeling. I'm trying to put a word on it, but it's like, coming home," she says. "It's the feeling of love, and the feeling of acceptance."

And with live touring finally back on the cards, she's keen to bring that feeling further south. "That's my main focus right now," she says. "*Magic Still Exists* was released during the pandemic, so I haven't toured with it yet. I'm so excited to tour that with the new album."

That means shows in Australia and New Zealand are on her mind. "I'm picturing how can we do each song live," she says, already dreaming up more magic!

Follow Agnes on socials @agnesofficial. *Milk* and *Balenciaga Covered Eyes* are out now on all good streaming platforms.

LESBIAN IN THE WORLD



WHY QUEER LOVE DESERVES BETTER THAN THIS ULTIMATUM

The Ultimatum: Queer Love Season 2 cast

*Jessie Lewthwaite dives into Season 2 of **The Ultimatum: Queer Love** on Netflix, where messy representation and toxic relationship dynamics leave her questioning the state of sapphic reality TV.*

I'm not a massive TV watcher, considering me and my ADHD prefer shorter-form content or more interactive entertainment like video games. But when I saw a second season of *The Ultimatum: Queer Love* was out, everyone in my household was locked in to marathon it – even our dog was excited to see just how normal his mummies actually are by comparison. Having now seen it all and needing several moments to cringe-watch from behind my gin glass, I have opinions. Sapphic social media has absolutely exploded with takes about this show – everyone is talking about it – and I feel compelled to share my absolutely correct opinions as well. Needless to say... there will be some spoilers. Go watch it, then come back to me to see how right I am.

First of all, if you watched this show with your partner and unironically thought, “We should do this!” – go to therapy. Just please go to therapy... The number of times I yelled at the TV, “You need therapy!” – honestly, the limit does not exist. The level of toxic, co-dependent and unhealthy relationships on this show was so extreme. I mean, I know it is curated for drama but my god, girls – we are not sending our best.

Starting with my coldest takes: why the straight host? They knew they were going to get pushback on this for getting the same straight host again, but instead of getting a queer host, they very obviously made the cast monologue about how much they appreciate that a straight woman would host this show and how good she is at it. I just *know* the producers had giant cue cards for the girls to read off. We, the audience, don't buy it. Also, still no pronouns under the cast's names?! I mean, come on... Again, they got heat for that last season too and they fixed it not at all. There were two people who use she/they pronouns this season, and most people would have no idea unless you're a pedantic nerd like me and looked it up.

Dragging out my soapbox now to once again reiterate that butch representation in the media sure does suck. Femmes on this show get

Hayley: smart, gorgeous, a scientist. Britney: a nurse, absolutely stunning, sincere and empathetic. Even Marita is a sweetie who just wants love. The butches get AJ the player, Mel the liar, and Magan the absolute trainwreck. AJ absolutely doesn't deserve Britney, and the fact Britney didn't get picked needs to be studied by science. Also, my theory is Mel is like Pinocchio except when she lies her hair gets greasier, which I think explains a lot. And I will flat-out never forgive Magan for what she did to Hayley. And yes, I acknowledge that there were toxic femmes too... Dayna was responsible for at least 70% of my gin cringing.

I could go on, but this isn't really about just one reality show. I once said that it is a good thing that queers now have the trash TV straights have had for years – and I stand by that, I do. I'm all for watching people fall in love after three weeks and talk about the significance of Spotify playlists and moving the fur babies into the hotel. That's our culture; that's the real part of reality TV. However, in a world with increasing homophobia and transphobia, and so many ready to call us crazy and unstable – maybe we don't choose this climate to platform the worst our community has to offer. That's my ultimatum to the media.

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*Dr Mataroria Lyndon
tackles your questions.*

TRANS RIGHTS GOING BACKWARDS OVERSEAS AND ATTEMPTS TO DO THE SAME OVER HERE HAVE GIVEN ME CRAZY ANXIETY IN RECENT MONTHS. CAN TEND HELP ME WITH MENTAL HEALTH ISSUES LIKE ANXIETY?

It's completely understandable that the current environment around trans rights can feel overwhelming and affect your mental health.

Yes, Tend can definitely help with mental health issues like anxiety. We recommend booking a 30-minute mental health consultation in the app, where our clinicians can listen without judgement, help create a plan, and refer you to additional support if needed.

If you're enrolled with Tend, you also have free access to health coaches and Health Improvement Practitioners who can support your mental wellbeing. You can choose someone with experience or a special interest in LGBTQIA+

health, and consult either in person or online.

Taking small steps, like reaching out for professional support and connecting with community groups, can make a big difference. Remember, you don't have to navigate this on your own — we're here to help you through it.

MY PARTNER AND I HAVE AN AGREEMENT THAT WE CAN PLAY AROUND IF WE ARE OVERSEAS. THAT MIGHT ONLY HAPPEN ONCE OR TWICE A YEAR. DO I NEED TO CONSIDER GETTING ON PREP FOR SOMETHING THAT HAPPENS SO INFREQUENTLY?

It's great that you're thinking ahead about your sexual health, even for infrequent situations. PrEP is highly effective at preventing HIV, especially for people who may have higher-risk sexual encounters.

If your overseas experiences involve mostly oral sex and no anal or vaginal penetration, the risk of HIV transmission is generally low. In those cases, PrEP might not be necessary. However, if there's any chance of penetrative sex or other higher-risk exposure, especially without condoms, it's worth having a conversation with a clinician about PrEP.

You might also consider HIV and STI testing before and after travel, and we recommend using condoms during any higher-risk encounters.

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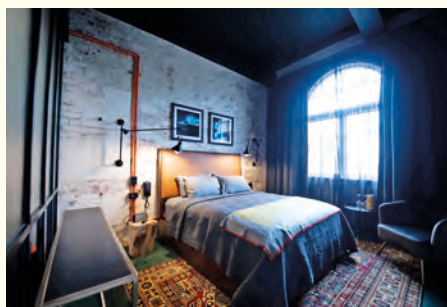
CULTURE, CUISINE & QUEER COOL: YOUR ULTIMATE WINTER IN WELLINGTON

*Wellington may be small in size, but its spirit – like its wind – is uncontainable. Whether it's your first time or your fifteenth, Aotearoa's capital continues to deliver: a city that fuses a deep love of the arts with an adventurous food scene, a proudly queer-friendly culture (the census declared it NZ's gayest city), and easy access to wild coastlines and native bush. It may be winter, but that doesn't mean hibernation. **Oliver Hall** dives headfirst into the city's warmest offerings.*

A taxi ride from Wellington Airport takes us along the city's famously curving coastline. We crack the window, and the salted sea air reminds us we're somewhere close to the edge of the world. Oriental Bay glints to our right, and beyond it lies a compact capital that punches above its weight in art, dining, nature – and charm.

STAY BOUTIQUE AT THE INTREPID HOTEL

Nestled just off Cuba Street, **The Intrepid Hotel** (theintrepidhotel.com) offers the kind of boutique experience that feels effortlessly cool. Once home to Cadbury's 1909 chocolate offices, this heritage building has been lovingly transformed into 18 high-ceilinged rooms with exposed brick, moody bathrooms, and an 'Eastern European meets global explorer' vibe. It's the kind of place that feels curated, not themed – and being in the heart of Wellington's queer district doesn't hurt either.



The Intrepid Hotel

DRINKS AT PUFFIN BAR

Tucked inside the hotel, **Puffin** (@puffin_wellington) is the Intrepid's crown jewel – a softly lit bar where the post-work crowd sip biodynamic wines and premium sake. Music floats gently under the clink of glasses, while industrial-chic interiors and cushioned booths invite lingering chats. It's one of those places where an hour feels like ten minutes.



Hummingbird

DINNER AT HUMMINGBIRD

For dinner that night, we head to **Hummingbird** (hummingbirdwellington.co.nz), where every plate we try deserves applause. From melt-in-the-mouth glazed lamb shoulder to rich parmesan gnocchi, it's culinary theatre. Post-mains, we disappear behind a faux wall into their hidden bar, where live jazz and perfectly balanced cocktails finish the evening in spectacular fashion.

FRIDAY NIGHT QUEER CRAWL: IVY & S&M'S

No Wellington trip is complete without embracing its queer nightlife. **S&M's** (@sandmsbar) is where cocktail lovers meet – on weekends, its downstairs is opened with a pumping dancefloor; midweek, that same space hosts kink-friendly crowds at Grunt events. **Ivy** (@ivybarandcabaret), meanwhile, caters to a younger, drag-loving audience and brims with student joy. Two bars, one big-



Wellington Rainbow Crossing



Karaka Café

hearted community, and plenty of sparkle.

BREAKFAST AT SIXES & SEVENS

On Saturday morning, we queue early at **Sixes & Sevens** (*sixes.co.nz*) to secure a square croissant – the elusive, custard-filled Instagram-famous pastry that vanishes by 9am. Their cabinet is a kaleidoscope of baking glory, and their in-house roasted coffee hits like a warm hug.

FEEL RUGGED ON A SEAL COAST SAFARI

After breakfast, it's time to see a wilder side of Wellington with **Seal Coast Safari** (*sealcoastsafari.co.nz*). When you've been to

Wellington numerous times, it's refreshing to discover a side of town you've never seen. Our 4WD tour starts in Otari-Wilton's Bush, New Zealand's only native plant botanical garden, before winding into Terawhiti Station's vast private farmland. We rumble past wind turbines taller than skyscrapers and arrive at a desolate, beautiful beach where fur seals lounge undisturbed. It's rugged, remote and magical.

LUNCH AT KARAKA CAFÉ

Back in the city, **Karaka Café** (*karakacafe.com*) brings soulful kai Māori to the waterfront.

CONTINUED...

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Wellington Apothecary



Hei



Zealandia

... CONTINUED

We order in *te reo* and feast on *hāngi*, *palusami*, and chop suey under the midday sun. Their cocktails – infused with local botanicals – taste like a collaboration between Mother Nature and your favourite mixologist. Sit outside in the sun; soak in this atmosphere like no other.

CREATE YOUR SCENT AT WELLINGTON APOTHECARY

A perfect winter afternoon activity, the scent-blending workshop at **Wellington Apothecary** (wellingtonapothecary.co.nz) is part cooking course, art class, and therapy session. Soul singer Deva Mahal leads us through a wide range of essential oils and the memories they conjure up, until we each create a signature scent – mine: fresh and herbaceous, my partner's: warm and woody, a combination that felt fittingly complementary. With an

abundance of candles, teas, and bath soaks lining every shelf, the store itself is a sensory haven. A must-visit in the heart of Cuba Street.

DINNER AT HEI

Hei (hei.co.nz) is just steps from our hotel and offers Chinese fusion in a space inspired by brutalist architecture. The Peking duck is crisped to perfection in a specialist oven; the pomelo-prawn salad bursts with zing. And the 'small plates'? Generous enough to feed both of us. We finish with desserts as colourful as they are delicious.

KIWI SPOTTING AT ZEALANDIA BY NIGHT

Later, we head to **Zealandia** (visitzealandia.com) for their famed night tour. An Oscar-worthy short film sets the tone before we're handed

red-light torches and led into the pitch-dark sanctuary. Though our kiwi encounter is brief, glow-worms light the forest like constellations, and rare birds call out as we wander. It's eerie, beautiful, and completely unique.

HITTING THE STRAIGHT(ER) BARS

It's important to support our gay nightlife, but in a city as friendly and free as Wellington, you don't need to limit yourself to only the queer venues. The wider nightlife scene is equally vibrant. We hop between rooftop hangout **Dirty Little Secret** ([@dirtylittlesecretwgtn](https://www.instagram.com/dirtylittlesecretwgtn)), **Hanging Ditch** ([@hangingditchbar](https://www.instagram.com/hangingditchbar)) – where bartenders reach for bottles of spirits suspended from ropes that sway above the bar – local brewery **Mean Doses** (meandoses.co.nz), and **Havana Bar** ([@havanabarwellington](https://www.instagram.com/havanabarwellington)), which brings some Cuban colour to an adorable villa on Wigan Street.

WELLINGTON NZ × YOUR EX



The Oatery



Wētā Workshop

BREAKFAST AT THE OATERY

Sunday's hangover cure is found at **The Oatery** (theoatery.nz). Their oat-based menu is nourishing and comforting – think cinnamon-spiced porridge loaded with peanut butter and poached fruit, washed down with organic juices and good coffee, leaving us feeling human again.

TĀKINA EXHIBITION CENTRE

Opposite Te Papa, **Tākina Convention and Exhibition Centre** (takina.co.nz) is Wellington's striking new home for major exhibitions. When we visit, *The Magic of Disney* is on show, which – like all of Tākina's exhibitions – was presented in both English and te reo. This month, the centre will house the *World Press Photo Exhibition* from Friday 5 September to Sunday 5 October, bringing the past year's most captivating and thought-provoking photojournalism and documentary photography from around the globe. Their café, *Zephyr*, is the perfect place for a post-exhibit flat white.

WĒTĀ WORKSHOP EXPERIENCE

We end the weekend in geeky style at **Wētā Workshop** (tours.wetaworkshop.com). Inside this deceptively modest Miramar building lives the genius behind everything from *The Lord of the Rings* to *Avatar*. We pose with orcs, swing swords, and sculpt alien heads from tin foil – all while learning about Wētā's history of storytelling. Our guide is bursting with passion, and we leave inspired to follow our own creative quests.

As our weekend comes to a close, it's clear Wellington's creative pulse, welcoming community, boundary-pushing food, and ever-changing cultural calendar doesn't rest over winter. It just layers up, pours a glass, and invites you to settle in.

Keep an eye on what's happening in Wellington at **WellingtonNZ.com** and follow **@WellingtonNZ** on socials.

GIVEAWAYS



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3 x Double Passes to Winter Pride's 2025 Finale Party

We're giving away three double passes to Winter Pride's most talked-about event: **the wedding-themed Finale Party in Queenstown!** This year's bash (Saturday 23 August) celebrates queer love, freedom, and connection with a diverse DJ line-up, safe spaces for all, and high-energy vibes. Dance and celebrate the power of being unapologetically seen. winterpride.co.nz



2 x Doubles Pass to Silo Theatre's Mother Play

Be among the first to see Silo Theatre's powerful new production, **Mother Play**, on 4 September at Q Theatre. Absurd and moving, it's a razor-sharp family drama from Pulitzer Prize-winner Paula Vogel. silotheatre.co.nz



Scan the QR Code to be into win! 🍀

BLOOD-SOAKED FANTASY, PASIFIKA POWER, AND HANDCRAFTED NONSENSE: THE INTERNATIONAL DRAG TALENT HEADING TO PALMY

*Palmerston North is set to sparkle this October with the arrival of three of Australia's most dynamic drag stars. **Drag Race Down Under** alums Lazy Susan, Kween Kong, and Gabriella Labucci will sashay into the Manawatū to headline Palmy Drag Fest on Saturday 4 October, bringing with them a mix of chaos, choreography, creativity, and camp.*

***YOUR EX** finds out what we can expect from these three international stars!*

LAZY SUSAN: MELBOURNE MAYHEM MEETS MOVIE MAGIC

Fresh off a whirlwind trip to Cannes, Melbourne's own Lazy Susan isn't just conquering stages—she's eyeing the silver screen. Her latest project, *Skin Side Up*, is a horror feature she's written and will direct. The film's



Lazy Susan

proof-of-concept was selected for a prestigious pitching event at the Cannes Film Festival.

"It's all very exciting. We're on track to begin shooting within the next 12 months, fingers and toes crossed!" she says.

Whether behind the camera or under the spotlight, Lazy is all about storytelling and spectacle.

"I've always been a filmmaker. From the moment I picked up a camera and started forcing my neighbourhood friends into backyard films, I was hooked... Whether I'm on stage or behind the camera, I'm chasing the same thing: fantasy and entertaining an audience. Just don't make me get a regular job plz!"

Crowned Melbourne's "Drag Queen of the Year" and celebrated internationally for her winning turn on the final season of *Drag Race Down Under*, Lazy is keen to finally connect with Kiwi fans—this time outside of a hotel room.

"Last time I was in Aotearoa, I spent the entire time locked in a hotel filming *Drag Race*. I'm beyond excited to return and actually perform in Palmy!"

And what can Palmy Drag Fest audiences expect?

"Madness, blood, ineptitude, chaos, and a deep, uncomfortable yearning!"

KWEEN KONG: PASIFIKA POWER AND DANCEFLOOR DOMINANCE

For Kween Kong, drag is not only performance—it's purpose. A seasoned dancer with a career spanning international stages, including her beginnings with renowned New Zealand company Black Grace, her work is steeped in storytelling and culture.

"Naturally, my drag has always been an extension of that (dance) energy," she says. "I bring to life the strong, matriarchal/warrior fa'afafine. It's embedded into every detail from costume to performance."

As the first Samoan queen to compete on *RuPaul's Drag Race*, Kween is conscious of the responsibility that visibility brings.

"I attribute my success not just from *Drag Race* but from the beginning of my career, to my perspective as a Pasifika artist."



Kween kong

PALMY DRAG FEST



Gabriella Labucci

Grounded by her South Auckland roots, Kween sees her presence onstage as powerful representation.

“Occupying the spaces I’m in will do wonders for young fa’afafine or queer people who struggle to see themselves reflected in mainstream media. I owe it to them to be as loud and proud as I am.”

And what does she have planned for Palmy?

“As most people who’ve watched my career will know, I’m a stunting, dancing diva! Prepare to be blown out of your seats!”

GABRIELLA LABUCCI: HANDCRAFTED CHAOS FROM BALLARAT TO AOTEAROA

Representing Australia’s regional artistry with pride, Gabriella Labucci hails from Ballarat—home of quirky creativity and a strong sense of community.

“The regional spirit comes through my drag by always trying to make the time to have a chat with anyone that wants to,” she says. “Regional folk aren’t exposed to drag all the time. It can truly be life-changing for some.”

Gabriella’s live-wire energy, surreal humour, and signature lip-syncs have made her a standout performer. Her Drag Race turn featuring the song “BMX Bitches” still haunts her—

“That song makes my body ache just hearing it!” she laughs.

When asked if her prep is meticulous or spontaneous, she’s honest:

“If I choreograph something entirely, chances are I’ll get caught up in the moment and forget what I had planned anyway. So having a few key points to hit and letting the rest flow is usually my recipe for success.”

As for her debut Aotearoa show without the looming threat of elimination?

“To quote the late great Christina Aguilera: ‘Why are you asking? Just buy a ticket to Palmy Drag Fest and find out!’ I’ll do what I do best: utter nonsense!”

PALMY IS ABOUT TO GET GLAM

With these three powerhouse performers set to headline, Palmy Drag Fest promises nights of high-octane entertainment, heartfelt storytelling, and unapologetic self-expression. Whether it’s Ruby Dax hosting Drag Bingo, DJ Kita Mean spinning songs from musicals all night long, the crafty fun of the rainbow fair or the star-studded main show, the festival will be a celebration of drag in all its wild and wonderful forms.

Tickets are on sale now at palmydrag.com.



2025

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FESTIVAL



LOVE OUT LOUD AT WINTER PRIDE'S WEDDING-THEMED FINALE PARTY

Celebrate queer love and community at Winter Pride's 2025 Finale Party—featuring a diverse DJ line-up, and safe spaces for all identities.

Winter Pride is going out with a bang this year—and it's saying "I do" to love, visibility, and queer joy in full celebration mode. Director Sam Coulthard is bringing big feelings and even bigger beats to Queenstown Memorial Hall on Saturday 23 August, with a wedding-themed blowout that's all about community connection and proudly being seen.

"As someone who DJs over 100 weddings a year, I've noticed how rare it still is to be part of queer weddings," says Coulthard. "So we decided to flip that. This year's Finale Party is a bold celebration of queer love and pride."

The diverse DJ line-up reflects Sam's kaupapa. Expect a high-energy soundtrack from crowd favourite James Johnson, fierce camp vibes from a (yet-to-be-announced) drag queen DJ, and international circuit sounds from DJ Mark, Sammy C's signature premium polish, Lenny Vibe's tech house beats, and Sydney's Jake Kilby rounding out the night with his deep, sultry, bathhouse-inspired set.

But it's not just about the music. Coulthard and the team have made space for everyone: "We've created chill-out areas so people can reset, feel safe, and still be part of the magic. Whether you're trans, non-binary, or anywhere in between, you belong here."

For many, Winter Pride is more than just a party. It's a feeling of belonging, a space to connect, and, as Coulthard puts it, "the freedom to fully be yourself." With ski runs by day and cowboy-themed parties by night, this is the celebration the community waits all year for.

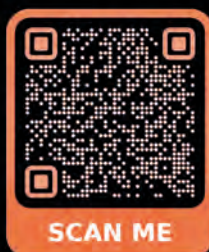
Winter Pride's Finale Party from 9pm, Saturday 23 August at Queenstown's Memorial Hall. Tickets from winterpride.co.nz



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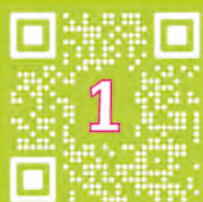


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†Based on data from the GEMINI 1 & 2 studies (patients new to treatment) and TANGO study (patients replacing their current HIV treatment). DTG + 3TC was compared with a regimen containing either 3 or 4 medicines, measuring either the percentage of patients with a viral load of <50 copies per mL or the percentage of patients with a viral load of ≥50 copies per mL.^{4,5}

Abbreviations: HIV, human immunodeficiency virus; ART, antiretroviral therapy; DTG, dolutegravir; 3TC, lamivudine.

References: 1. GlaxoSmithKline NZ, DOVATO Consumer Medicine Information, 2023. Available at: www.medsafe.govt.nz/consumers/cmi/d/dovato.pdf (accessed Jan 2024). 2. PHARMAC. Pharmaceutical Schedule, Antiretrovirals. February 2024; version 31:1–320. Available at: www.schedule.pharmac.govt.nz/2024/02/01/Schedule.pdf (accessed Feb 2024). 3. Department of Health and Human Services. Guidelines for the use of antiretroviral agents in adults and adolescents with HIV, March 2023 (accessed Nov 2023). 4. Cahn P, et al. *AIDS* 2022;36(1):39–48. 5. Osileyemi O, et al. *Clin Infect Dis* 2022;75(6):975–986. 6. EACS (European AIDS Clinical Society) Guidelines, version 12.0 (updated October 2023).

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