

YOUREX

WHY AUCKLAND
IS LEADING THE
SEXUAL HEALTH
REVOLUTION

MAKING HUMANITY GREAT AGAIN

There aren't many comedians whose material has taken on a life of its own quite like Suzy Eddie Izzard's. For a generation of queer kids — many of whom encountered her work through her most beloved performance the infamous Daphne du Maurier story.

WHAT SAME-SEX COUPLES
NEED TO KNOW ABOUT
STARTING A FAMILY IN NZ

COMMUNITY HEROES
ROBERT BARRY
LILY CATASTROPHE
EMILY C. BROWNING
XIN JI

EDDIE IZZARD

Remixing Trans Narratives

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AIR NEW ZEALAND

STAR ALLIANCE 

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FROM THE EDITOR



Here Comes the Sun

November always feels like the first deep breath of summer. The evenings stretch longer, the mood softens, and suddenly, everything feels possible again.

This issue of *YOUR EX* is all about leaning into momentum — whether that's getting behind the wheel of something new, setting creative goals, or finding connection in the places that make our community sparkle.

Our cover star, the incomparable Suzy Eddie Izzard, reminds us that moving forward — with humour, heart, and a sense of purpose — is a radical act. Shot by the brilliant Amanda Searle, it's a portrait of persistence and joy.

As our rainbow communities step into another season of celebration, let's keep championing queer stories, queer creativity, and queer-owned businesses. Every promotion, every collaboration, and every voice in *YOUR EX* helps sustain a platform made by us, for us — and that's something worth turning the page for.

Olly & Matt



COVER | SUZY EDDIE IZZARD BY AMANDA SEARLE.
AMANDA-SEARLE.COM @AMANDAS_PHOTO

YOUR *ex*

UNAPOLOGETICALLY QUEER

PUBLISHER

TMO Publications LTD

EDITORIAL

Oliver Hall
editor@gayexpress.co.nz
021 206 2902

ADVERTISING

Matt Fistonich
advertise@gayexpress.co.nz
021 420 680

CONTRIBUTORS

Damon Allenby
Jinki Cambroner
Naomi Haussmann
Tux Hika
James Maxwell
Steven Oates

PRINTER

Webstar

DESIGN

Spinc Media

www.YourEx.co.nz

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YOUR EX's TALENTS



DR MATARORIA LYNDON

is the Co-Founder and Director of Population Health & Equity at Tend. He's also a public health doctor and senior lecturer, championing inclusive healthcare for our rainbow whānau.



JASMIN SHEIKH

splits her time between managing finances for a large real estate firm and indulging her passion for photography, specialising in events of all kinds.



JOEL AMORES

designs *YOUR EX* pages. He is a founding member of Spinc Media, which has been producing graphics and artistic illustrations for magazines since 2011. When he's not working, you'll find him camping or off-roading.



JESSIE LEWTHWAITE

works in rainbow inclusion and awareness and likes to joke that she is gay for pay. She splits her spare time between co-chairing the Rainbow NZ Charitable Trust, being an exec for Rainbow Auckland and playing video games.



ANGUS MCDUGALL

Angus is a New Zealand Fashion Week ambassador and *Fashion in the Field* judge, who channels his love for the fashion and beauty industries into crafting recommendations that celebrate inclusivity, individuality, and self-expression.



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MINI COOPER SE:

CUTE, CAMP, AND LONG-RANGE READY

QUICK SPECS

Model	Mini Cooper SE (2025)
Price	\$66,990 + on-road costs
0–100 km/h	6.3 s
Range	~382 km (WLTP)
Motor	160 kW / 330 Nm
Battery	49.2 kWh usable
Drive	FWD, single-speed auto
Warranty	5 years / 100,000 km
ANCAP	★★★★★ (2025)



Matt Fistonich takes the new electric MINI out for a spin!

THE first electric MINI (released in 2020) was cute — like a twink with confidence but perhaps lacking a wee bit when it comes to stamina. Fun in the city, 1000%. But take it outside Auckland and you'd be white-knuckling it to the next charger. Now, MINI's back with the second-generation Cooper Electric. This time, the SE model has the range (and the energy) to back up the attitude. You can finally plan a weekend away without mapping every charger from Ponsonby to Uretiti.

BATTERY GLOW-UP

There are now two versions of the new MINI Electric:

Mini Cooper E

— 41 kWh battery (37 kWh usable)

Mini Cooper SE

— 54 kWh battery (49 kWh usable)

That's an increase from the 29 kWh the 2020 MINI Electric had. The new SE's range is now up to 380–400 km, making your coastal road trip a reality.

WORTH THE EXTRA COIN?

At \$66,990 plus on-road costs, the SE is more expensive than the base E. For the added range and power, it's the best money you'll spend outside of Botox and filler.

A 50 KWH BATTERY MEANS:

- On a regular plug, you'll top up from 65% to 90% overnight
- On a wallbox or DC fast charger, it'll go from 10% to 80% in around 30 minutes — just long enough for a flat white and a scroll through Grindr

PERFORMANCE: CITY CHIC, OPEN ROAD READY

Power jumps to 160 kW / 330 Nm, good for a 0–100 km/h sprint in 6.3 seconds. It's still front-wheel drive, and still has that iconic “go-kart” energy — agile and cheeky enough to make you grin.

It's the automotive equivalent of a drag performer mid-death drop: dramatic, precise and designed to get attention.

LOOKS & INTERIOR

Gone is the loud yellow “I'm electric!” stripe. In its place are subtle S badging and a wider stance.



Inside, a circular OLED display takes centre stage. It's pure MINI theatre, offering custom drive “moods” with ambient lighting. Recycled materials and vegan textiles keep it eco-fabulous — sustainable *and* stylish, like a Ponsonby vintage pop-up.

FEATURES THAT FEEL LUXE

- Heated seats + steering wheel
- Built-in massage function
- Panoramic glass roof for Tāmaki Drive sunrise cruises
- Harman/Kardon audio — your Charli XCX playlist will slap
- 360° cameras for parallel parking even on the tightest streets
- Five-star ANCAP safety rating (2025)
- The most fun you can have on four wheels with MINI's go-kart style.

THE FINAL VERDICT

The new MINI Cooper SE is priced well, despite its premium feel. It delivers personality, performance and practicality in a way few EVs dare. If you want an electric car that doesn't feel like it was designed by accountants — one that's playful, bold and proudly a little bit fabulous — this might be the queerest electric car on the market right now.

FOR MORE INFO AND TO BOOK YOUR VERY OWN MINI EXPERIENCE, POP IN AND SEE THE FRIENDLY TEAM AT AUCKLAND MINI GARAGE IN THE HEART OF NEWMARKET, OR VISIT AUCKLANDMINIGARAGE.CO.NZ

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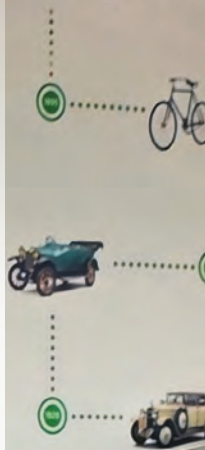
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ŠKODA

ROBERT BARRY:

DELIVERING THE
BEST IN CUSTOMER
EXPERIENCE

THE JOUR



Robert Barry

TRISTRAM × YOUR EX

*A former manager of the New Zealand Falcons rugby team, and a familiar face who has welcomed you to Urge Events dance parties over the past decade, **Robert Barry** has made a career pivot from motoring journalism into selling new and used vehicles for Tristram, Premium Automotive Care.*

Although based in the Tristram Škoda showroom on Hillside Road, Wairau Valley, Robert can sell any new vehicle from the company's family of brands, including Volkswagen, MG, Chery, Omoda, Jaecoo, GMSV, Isuzu Ute, Hyundai, JAC utes, and Renault commercials.

"After 22 years in automotive journalism it was time for a change. I'd pretty much worked from home from the first COVID lockdown in 2020, and I missed working in a team environment with a great bunch of people," Robert says.

"It was an opportunity to put my knowledge of cars and the automotive industry to good use, while also having a bit of fun, which is very important in any role.

"I'm very happy to say that two months in, I have found my tribe. We're a very family-orientated automotive retailer. The owner of the company, Mark Hayward, is joined by his sons Cruz in sales, and Austin who manages the tyre shop. Mark's mother and sister also work in the business.

"We're professional but we're not corporate. We wear branded polo shirts rather than shirt and tie. We like to make our customers feel comfortable in the retail environment. If you wander into the dealership wearing boardies and jandals, we're not going to look down our noses at you — we're more likely going to offer you a coffee.

"Much like the diverse group of people I work with, our customers are equally diverse, and all have quite different needs.

"I sold a \$17,000 VW Polo to an excited 16-year-old girl who had a freshly minted restricted driver's licence, a new Chery Tiggo 4 to a young gay couple buying their first car together, a new Golf R Black Edition to a couple downsizing from a 7-seat SUV, and a Škoda Kamiq Monte Carlo to a lovely lady as her retirement car.

"The lovely thing about this role is the ability to help people. I'm a consultative salesperson. I don't want to pressure people into buying the wrong car — I want to make sure that we find the best solution for our customers.

"And if we don't have the right vehicle on the yard, then we'll find one. We often sell cars on behalf of our customers or buy them back outright. There is a big demand right now for low-mileage three- to five-year-old Škoda Kodiaqs, so I'm on the hunt for these for several customers.



Janelle Wells - Admin & Business Support.

"We are a one-stop shop. Not only does Tristram offer new and used vehicles, but also the full range of financial services, including insurance, paint protection and interior protection, and personalised plates. Furthermore, our service department can look after all makes and models, and we have our own in-house collision repairer and tyre shop.

"Tristram places great importance on its partnerships in giving back to the community that supports it, and you'll see one of our vehicles playing a supporting role in the Rainbow Pride Parade next February."

Tristram are also proud partners of: CML Racing, Flight Path, Harcourts Cooper and Co, Hibiscus Coast Cricket, Milford Tennis, North Harbour Club, North Harbour Water Polo,



Rod Williams - GM Finance & Insurance.

Ponsonby Rugby Club, Pupuke Golf Course, R Flagship Marine, and St Cuthbert's College.

Experience premium automotive care by visiting Robert in person at Tristram Wairau Valley, call him on 021 0807 0777, or email him at robert@tristramauckland.co.nz

A SEASON FOR THE GAYS (AND EVERYONE WE BRING ALONG): AUCKLAND PHIL'S 2026 LINE-UP IS SERVING CULTURE



PHOTO | SHEKU KANNEH-MASON

If your idea of a good night out involves drama, glamour, and maybe a few tears in the dark, the Auckland Philharmonia's 2026 season is calling your name. The city's biggest band (sorry, Six60) has unveiled a programme that's pure queer joy — cinematic classics, 80s anthems, and world-class divas of every discipline.

This isn't just classical music. It's a vibe.

GLOBAL ICONS, LOCAL LEGENDS

First up: cello heart-throb Sheku Kanneh-Mason (pictured). You've seen him play at that royal wedding (before Harry and Meghan packed up and moved to California). Now he's making his NZ debut — and only Auckland gets him. He'll perform Elgar's Cello Concerto, and if you don't cry at least once, check your pulse.

Then there's Grammy-winning violinist Gil Shaham, tackling Beethoven like it's couture on a runway. Acclaimed Canadian violinist James Ehnes returns with the kind of musical sparkle that would make Cher proud, while pianist Alexander Gavrylyuk and a stellar cast of conductors round out what might be the most glamorous orchestra season we've ever seen.

FOR THE DRAMA QUEENS (LITERALLY)

Puccini's *Madama Butterfly* takes flight in July with Giordano Bellincampi at the helm and

Erika Grimaldi as the doomed heroine. Opera in Concert means no sets, no fluff — just emotion, high notes, and heartbreak that echoes through the Auckland Town Hall. Bring tissues. And someone's hand to hold dramatically.

FROM MATARIKI TO THE MOVIES

When Matariki rolls around, the Phil joins forces with *Waiata Anthems*, bringing te reo Māori versions of Kiwi hits into full symphonic bloom. It's the kind of night that makes you feel lucky to live in Aotearoa — where tradition and innovation can hold hands under the stars.

Then the orchestra goes full-on Hollywood. *The Wizard of Oz Live in Concert* is basically a queer fever dream: rainbow references, sparkly shoes, live orchestra. *Somewhere Over the Rainbow* hits different when it's played by a full-strength orchestra.

And if that's not enough cinematic splendour, *The Magic of John Williams* concert brings us goosebump-inducing scores from galaxies far, far away, to the wizarding world. Close your eyes and you're in Hogwarts. Or space. Or both.

BIG HAIR, BIGGER FEELINGS: BACK TO THE 80S

Shoulder pads, sequins and the symphony unite for *Back to the 80s* — a night of hits from Madonna, Cyndi Lauper, and Huey Lewis, arranged for a full symphony orchestra, and

performed by incredible guest vocalists and the Auckland Phil. It's the camp crossover we didn't know we needed. Expect perms, power ballads, and maybe one too many slow-motion key changes.

BRING THE KIDS (OR JUST YOUR INNER ONE)

Aotearoa's favourite prehistoric pals take the stage with *Kiri and Lou in Concert*, complete with stop-motion visuals and live orchestra magic. It's sweet, silly and sincerely joyful — and honestly, who among us doesn't love songs about feelings?

There's also *Tunes 4 Tamariki: The Fantabulous Animal Orchestra*, featuring Kiwi author Donovan Bixley and a menagerie of musical creatures. Proof that classical music can roar, squeak, and giggle.

BOOK IT BEFORE YOUR FRIENDS DO

Tickets are already on sale at aucklandphil.nz, and subscriptions come with all the perks — best seats, savings, and bragging rights when everyone else can't get in.

So grab your queer crew, your opera-loving aunts, your film-score boyfriends, and whoever else appreciates a bit of culture with their cocktails. The Auckland Phil's 2026 season is one long standing ovation waiting to happen.

Follow Auckland's orchestra in 2026



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OUT & ABOUT

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TEND × YOUR EX



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FINDING YOU MENTAL HEALTH SUPPORT

WHAT MENTAL HEALTH SUPPORT IS AVAILABLE THROUGH TEND FOR LGBTQ+ PEOPLE EXPERIENCING ANXIETY, DEPRESSION, OR MINORITY STRESS?

I know that for many in our LGBTQ+ whānau, life can sometimes feel overwhelming — whether it's anxiety, depression, or the added strain of minority stress. It's not always easy to reach out for help, and it can be even harder to find support that feels genuinely safe and affirming.

At Tend, we want you to know you're welcome here. We've created a free online mental health service that's open to everyone in Aotearoa. You don't need to be a Tend patient and you don't need a GP referral. This is about making care accessible and judgement-free. Anyone can access this free service — all you have to do is download the Tend app.

From the app, you can book a 30-minute online session with one of our qualified Health Improvement Practitioners (HIPs). HIPs provide brief,

evidence-based support for concerns like anxiety or stress. In your session, you'll have a chance to kōrero about what's going on for you, be heard without judgement, and learn practical tools to support your wellbeing. Sessions are available nationwide, Monday to Friday, 8am–8pm. Please note that this service is not intended for emergencies or those in crisis — if you need urgent help, free call 0508 828 865. You can also contact OUTLine NZ (0800 688 5463) for rainbow-specific peer support.

If you need longer-term or more specialised care, we'll work with you to connect to the right provider or service for ongoing support. Most importantly, this is a safe and inclusive space where your identity is respected, your hauora (wellbeing) is prioritised, and your voice matters.

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STARTING A FAMILY: WHAT QUEER COUPLES IN AOTEAROA NEED TO KNOW

Stewart Dalley advises what queer intended parents need to know about surrogacy, adoption and the law in New Zealand.

For many queer couples in Aotearoa, the dream of having children isn't just emotional; it's deeply bureaucratic. Between approval from the Ethics Committee on Assisted Reproductive Technology (ECART), surrogacy agreements, adoption law and guardianship rules, same-sex parents often discover that wanting a baby and legally being someone's parent are two very different things.

To help demystify the process, YOUR EX spoke with family and immigration lawyer Stewart Dalley of DS Law, one of the country's most experienced legal voices in queer parenthood and, notably, part of the first same-sex de facto couple in New Zealand to adopt children. Based on both his legal work and lived experience, here's what queer couples need to know before starting their journey.

SURROGACY IN NZ: TRADITIONAL VS GESTATIONAL – DOES IT MATTER LEGALLY?

In New Zealand, there is no legal distinction between a traditional surrogate (who uses her own eggs) and a gestational surrogate (where eggs and sperm come from donors or intended parents). The surrogate is always the legal mother at birth, regardless of biology. If she has a partner, that person is recognised as the second legal parent.

The intended parents, even if genetically connected, have no legal parental status until an adoption is approved by the court. This can take months, during which time queer parents are in legal limbo.



Stewart Dalley

A draft bill currently with the select committee could ease that process, but only for ECART-approved gestational surrogacy. It would allow intended parents to be recognised without adoption. Until then, however, the law sees birth as parenthood, not biology or intention.

WHAT IF A SURROGATE CHANGES HER MIND?

New Zealand has no express legal protection for intended parents if a surrogate decides not to relinquish the baby.

According to Dalley, "In one recent case, the court ordered that the surrogate and the intended parents share day-to-day care of the child." That outcome, unimaginable for most hopeful parents, highlights why emotional preparation and legal clarity are as important as the medical process itself.

PROTECTING YOUR HEARTS (AND RIGHTS): PRACTICAL STEPS FOR INTENDED PARENTS

Before any medical process begins, make sure all parties have:

- Independent counselling, separately and then together
- Independent legal advice, not from the same lawyer
- A written surrogacy agreement. While not all clauses can be enforced, it records intentions and helps guide any court process
- Real conversations about ongoing contact and origins. "Every child has a fundamental right to know where they come from," Dalley says. If anonymity or secrecy is part of the plan, think twice

DOMESTIC VS INTERNATIONAL SURROGACY: THE REALITY CHECK

While international surrogacy may appear faster or more transactional, it can be significantly more complicated for queer couples.

Many countries still do not allow same-sex intended parents to enter surrogacy agreements at all.

Some operate under anonymous egg donor systems, meaning your child may never be able to trace their biological origins.

New Zealand does not recognise foreign parental orders, even if your names are on an overseas birth certificate. You will still need to adopt your own child from overseas, often while stranded offshore for up to 12 weeks with a newborn, unable to return until the adoption hearing and New Zealand passport are granted.

By contrast, domestic surrogacy keeps you on home ground, connected to your community and healthcare system. It is still a process — ECART approvals, Oranga Tamariki assessments and the adoption itself — "but at least that takes place from the comfort of your own home," Dalley points out.

CO-PARENTING BETWEEN TWO SAME-SEX COUPLES: FOUR ADULTS, ONE BABY – WHAT THE LAW ALLOWS

Some queer families are formed through co-parenting arrangements between two couples — for example, a lesbian couple and a gay couple choosing to raise a child together. While that reflects modern whānau structures, the law does not.

HERE IS HOW PARENTHOOD IS ASSIGNED LEGALLY:

- The person who gives birth is the legal mother
- Her partner (if any) is also legally recognised as a parent
- A sperm donor is not considered a parent, even if biology is involved
- The donor's partner has no status at all

QUEER FAMILIES



PHOTO | CHRISTIAN BOWEN

The other couple may apply for guardianship and day-to-day care orders, but those expire when the child turns 18 and do not equal legal parenthood. Adoption by the second couple would legally displace the first couple — the law still only allows for two parents.

Co-parenting agreements can lay out intention and roles, and courts can use them as guidance. However, they are only enforceable if a judge believes they serve the welfare and best interests of the child above all else, not the adults' preferences.

WHY QUEER PARENTS STILL FIGHT FOR LEGAL RECOGNITION – EVEN AFTER BIRTH

Dalley and his partner chose to adopt their own children despite being their primary caregivers from birth. “We weren’t married, and at the time, the law only recognised straight married or de facto couples,” he says. “So we made a deliberate choice — apply to adopt as a same-sex de facto couple and force the system to acknowledge us.”

Their adoption was granted, creating a legal precedent that helped shift interpretation going forward. Today, same-sex couples can adopt regardless of marital status — but the emotional strain remains. Months of parenting without legal status is still a standard part of the process.

“It’s still a draining experience and you are still left in legal limbo for months after the baby has been born with no legal status until the adoption goes through. We need to do far better,” Dalley insists.

NEXT STEPS

If you are a queer couple planning a family in New Zealand, do not start with doctors — start with lawyers and counsellors.

The medical part may take weeks. The emotional and legal groundwork takes months, and in many ways defines the health of your future family more than any fertility treatment.

Queer families are already here. The law is still catching up.

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SUZY EDDIE IZZARD: SURREAL BRILLIANCE MEETS RELENTLESS POSITIVITY

*As she prepares to return to Aotearoa with **The Remix Tour**, the comedian, actor, marathon runner and politician sits down with **YOUR EX's Oliver Hall** to discuss remixing trans narratives and the power of pushing forward, one step at a time.*



COVER STORY

There aren't many comedians whose material has taken on a life of its own quite like Suzy Eddie Izzard's. For a generation of queer kids — many of whom encountered her through a scratched DVD of *Dress to Kill*

— Eddie didn't just tell jokes. She rerouted history. In one breath, she'd be discussing God's questionable management style, and in the next she'd be reimagining Darth Vader arguing with a canteen cashier over trays. Her comedy didn't punch down or rely on cynicism. It was expansive, curious, profoundly odd, and in its own quiet way, radically queer.

This month, Eddie returns to New Zealand with *The Remix Tour*, a show built from 35 years of her most beloved material. Except she doesn't simply perform the classics; she rewrites them. Routines like the infamous Death Star Canteen reappear, but suddenly Daphne du Maurier wanders into the scene. Jokes mutate, stories double back on themselves. It isn't nostalgia — it's evolution.

"I have to make myself laugh," she tells me. "If I'm just repeating the same thing, it dies for me."

We meet over a video call on a balmy British evening in late August. Eddie, who has run more than 80 marathons for charity, often on consecutive days, speaks with the assured calm of someone who has personally tested the limits of endurance and found them useful.

When I ask whether performing on stage as Suzy in 2025 feels different compared to being the "executive transvestite" that captured comedic hearts in the 1990s, she doesn't hesitate.

"I've tried not to make it different. Some people transition and feel they're a different person or character. I didn't feel that. I've always felt gender-fluid," she says. "When I turned 50, I thought, 'Well, for the next 50 years, I'll express myself in a more feminine way.' But I don't act differently. I'm still irascible. If someone gives me a hard time in the street, I'll give them a hard time back."

She grins.

"Some people call me Eddie, some call me Suzy, my brother alternates between the two. I have two live names. No dead names. I'm quite happy with that."

The press release for *The Remix Tour* promises that "no two nights will be the same". When I bring that up, she mock-protests, "Have I said that? In a court of law?" then concedes that yes, there's truth in it.

"I tend to go on stage not quite knowing what I'm going to say. Fully improvised shows don't always work, but I need an element of risk. If I'm not enjoying it, I'm not firing on all cylinders."

This blend of discipline (she performed all 23 characters from *Hamlet* in a solo production in

New York last year) and mischief is a precision balance few comedians can hold. Eddie is part of that lineage of British surrealists — Monty Python are her self-described "Olympian gods" — but she's also the only one among them who can do it in four languages.

French, German, Spanish, English. She has done comedy tours in all of them. She calls it "comedy without borders". And perhaps that's what makes her so vital now, especially in a moment where borders and identities have become weaponised language.

So I ask the question I've asked many LGBTQ+ artists over the last two years: is it harder to be funny in 2025, given the intensity of political debate around trans lives?

"No," she says simply. "It's completely fine, because I don't go in banging a gong about being trans. I just say I happen to be trans. I don't do party politics — that dates very quickly. Instead, I'll talk about things like: why would a sentient God create dinosaurs for 180 million years, and then give us just two million? And we've already invented poetry and Scrabble. We're doing pretty well!"

And yet, she acknowledges the noise, the spectacle, the headlines, the politicians who have rediscovered trans lives as a convenient scare tactic.

"Yes, the right wing is kicking off. They want to drag the world back to the 1930s while the rest of humanity is trying to move forward into the 2030s. But it's easier now to be out (than it was in the 90s). A trans woman just won the Comedy Award at the Edinburgh Fringe this year. That's progress. The noise is just bigger."

That friction — progress on the ground, hysteria in the headlines — is familiar to many queer Kiwis. "Remember the noise around marriage equality?" Eddie asks. "It was huge. Can you hear it now? No. It's gone."

This is where Eddie surprises me. Most people I interview in our communities carry a tone of urgency about threats to progress. Eddie is not dismissive, but she refuses despair.

"I'm a relentless positivist," she says. "See a negative, do a positive. And if you can't change something instantly, keep your head in a good place and start doing something positive anyway. We forget how much has already been gained: marriage equality, hate crime laws, visibility, civil rights. Count the blessings. Smell the roses."

Importantly, she's not sentimental about it. She brings up the Weimar Republic, a period of queer and trans cultural flourishing in 1920s Berlin, and the devastation that followed.

"Things seemed very positive, then it went bad... then worse... then murder, then concentration camps," she says evenly. "And yet after Hitler, Konrad Adenauer restored rights to all German citizens. Germany rebuilt itself from that hell."

Then she says what might be the thesis of her entire worldview:

"These times will pass. When they do, we'll come out the other side, and we keep edging things forward. You don't want to leap too fast — it doesn't work. The way to make lasting progress is to keep moving things steadily."

For someone who has literally run 27 marathons in 27 days in honour of Nelson Mandela, and 32 marathons on a treadmill streaming live for charity because a global pandemic got in the way, this slow, steady mantra lands with authority. She knows something about putting one foot in front of the other.

After discussing politics, we return to the sillier stuff. I ask how she'll spend her downtime in Aotearoa. She lights up.

"Cycling," she laughs. "I like pootling about, I never really plan it. There's something great about bicycles. I tried the electric ones — they're fun — but now I'm back to using body power. It's healthier. And you can freewheel downhill!"

Before we wrap, I ask if she has anything she'd like to say specifically to her New Zealand LGBTQ+ audience, especially those coming to see her for the first time.

"If you've never seen my material and you're thinking, 'Is it going to be two hours of transgender content?' — it isn't. I do surreal bollocks. It jumps between silly and intelligent constantly. I just happen to be trans. And I'm very positive about it."

Then, in one final shrug that feels like the perfect epilogue to a three-decade career of turning identity into something expansive rather than confining, she smiles and says:

"Nobody says, 'Oh, you play guitar and sing songs — and you're straight?' No one gives a shit about being straight. So no one should give a shit about being trans either. Be out, be proud, be relaxed."

Tickets available at bohmpresents.com

TOUR DATES

Suzy Eddie Izzard's *The Remix Tour*

CHRISTCHURCH
Friday 21 November
Isaac Theatre Royal

WELLINGTON
Monday 24 November
Michael Fowler Centre

AUCKLAND
Wednesday 26 November
The Civic



A LOVE LETTER TO LESBIAN WELLINGTON

Jessie Lewthwaite celebrates our queerest capital.

By a happy coincidence I ended up having back-to-back party weekends away in the capital. Coming down from Auckland, I was concerned my soft Australian skin would be cold, and I was especially worried about how the gale-force winds would affect my hair, which I sculpt to make it look messy and like I don't care, but it takes me 20 minutes to get it right. However, this little capital city had a heart that pulsed rainbow after dark—right there between the government buildings and the vape smoke.

There's something beautifully scrappy about queerness in Wellington. Cuba Street is somehow an aspirational mix of Melbourne and San Francisco, with the way it is trying to look so rooted in the soul of the real people and their stories, but will still charge you \$8 for an oat flat white. They love a stylishly mismatched outfit that looks like it came from both a costume box and a climate protest. You'll find drag artists running fundraisers for trans youth one night and performing ABBA covers the next. You'll see dykes in flannel slow dancing with poets who've just come out as non-binary,

and no one bats an eye. Everyone's a little bit earnest, a little bit awkward, and entirely unbothered by the forecast.

A Saturday at Ivy feels like the full queer life cycle condensed into a few hours: teenagers testing out their first lipstick names, long-time lovers slow dancing to a remix of Florence + The Machine, someone's mum buying everyone tequila in a show of allyship. If you loiter by the smoking area long enough, you'll inevitably end up in a conversation about whether the alphabet acronym should expand again or collapse gracefully. It's queer academia, but in crop tops and harnesses.

Wellington is also relentlessly queer, which I absolutely love for a capital city. As an Australian, the idea of going to Canberra and expecting it to be a beacon of queer culture is hilarious. How do you expect the suits of public service to also serve drag realness after dark? But Wellington goes from corporate button-down bars overcharging during happy hour to a bookshop hosting a sapphic book club within about 100m of each other. The queerness is so powerful that when I saw the Beehive, and remembered who is our current Queen Bee, it

felt so out of place in a city like this. The capital truly has everything—whether you are searching for coffee that's ethical, a government that's corrupt, or a nightlife where you can actually find a femme on a weeknight.

Wellington queer culture is like your eccentric artsy aunt who wears hand-knitted rainbow scarves and drags you to queer book launches, while Auckland is more your posh cousin who brunches in Ponsonby and only remembers Pride if it comes with a sponsored cocktail. In Wellington, 11% of people openly ticked the rainbow box on the census—possibly because nobody here cares if you show up to yoga in drag, or argue about Judith Butler over craft beer. Auckland, meanwhile, is still figuring out if it's the next Sydney or just really into beige apartments with “bi-curious” lighting. Both cities host legendary queer nights, but in Wellington you'll stumble into Ivy Bar midweek and find half the crowd debating pronouns over poetry slams, while in Auckland you'll need a group chat, a cover charge, and a backup plan for when the Uber cancels.

Wellington is a tiny act of resistance, a love letter written in thick eyeliner and loud laughter. It's not perfect—but perfection never looked this good in flannel anyway.

RED-HOT AND NOT DONE TALKING: EMILY C. BROWNING ARRIVES

*Pansexual pop producer and clown-core diva **Emily C. Browning** has spent the last five years building up to her bold debut album, **PRIMARY**. She opens up to **YOUR EX** about queer community, creative confidence, and trusting her own damn ears.*

There's a line in Emily C. Browning's song "Not Done" that hits like a manifesto: "Still mad and I'm not done talking yet." It's more than a lyric — it's a statement of intent. After five years of independent producing, songwriting and slow-burning momentum, the Ōtautahi-based alt-pop artist and self-proclaimed "clown-core diva" has finally dropped her debut album, *PRIMARY* — and she's doing it on her own terms.

"Cathartic! Scary! Relief!" is how she describes the feeling of releasing the full 11-track body of work. "Some of the singles have been out for literal years, and it feels so good to put them all in context and tie it off with a big campy bow."

That theatrical flair — campy bows and all — is central to Browning's world. *PRIMARY* isn't just a debut; it's a colourful reckoning with identity, growth, and shedding old skins. "Before realising I was pansexual, I used to subscribe to a lot of comp-het behaviour," she says. "I was this straight, palatable, acoustic-folk sweetheart." But after dyeing her hair red and fully embracing her Aries chaos, everything changed. "Now, my videos are brighter, my music is bolder, and I take more artistic risks."

The title *PRIMARY* references all kinds of firsts — her debut album, the strong colour palette she's now known for, and a raw emotional directness that cuts through the gloss. "To me, *PRIMARY* means new territory, bright colours, and a series of firsts."

One of those firsts was learning to trust her own ears. Browning, who now produces all her own material, says the steepest lesson was letting go of external validation. "I used to send demos to other producers for feedback and then change my work based on their thoughts," she explains. "Ultimately I realised I liked my versions better! That's always my advice for upcoming producers — especially women, trans people, or gender



PHOTO | NAOMI HAUSSMANN | @NAYHAUSS

non-conformers — what do YOU like? What do YOUR experiences bring to the music?"

It's advice she's lived by — and the proof is in the pudding. Her earlier single "Andy" was nominated for the APRA Silver Scroll in 2022, and her latest, "Goldfish", is nominated in 2025. But despite the growing recognition, Browning keeps things grounded. "I'm currently in a nice little bubble of public anonymity while still being recognised in the industry. If music streaming paid a liveable wage, it would all be perfect!"

Outside the studio, Browning is just as dynamic behind the decks. DJing under the name Richard, she's become a staple at Ginger's Lesbian Pop-Ups, Munch Sapphic Events, Queer Horizons and Christchurch Pride.

"Honestly, I owe all my confidence to the queer community," she says. "DJ-ing for the gays has allowed me to practise being a little show pony for hours at a time. It's such a good exercise in shaking off my inner repressed cobwebs."

That sense of community is key — and Aotearoa's queer scene has clearly shaped her. "We're innovative. We see gaps in the market and fill them with opportunities," she says. "Ginger's is an awesome example — lots of people arrive alone and leave with new connections. How good?!"

As for her home city of Ōtautahi? She's not leaving anytime soon. "We've been through a lot, and there's this palpable sense of support. The arts scene here is buzzy. We're building a new city together."



LILY CATASTROPHE:

LAUGHING THROUGH THE BUREAUCRACY

Comedian Lily Catastrophe discusses flipping the script on gender-affirming care in Aotearoa.

There's something quietly radical about a trans woman standing on a stage in Aotearoa and saying, "This is my life." For comedian and cabaret artist Lily Catastrophe, the act of speaking – and laughing – about her experiences is both art and advocacy. "So many of the conversations around trans folk in Aotearoa happen without any trans people being even remotely involved," she tells us. "Just being up there and talking about my actual lived experience already says something."

Lily Catastrophe, the performance persona of Shiyi Redpath, has become one of the most distinctive new voices in New Zealand comedy. Winner of Best New Comedian at the 2024 Wellington Comedy Awards and runner-up in burlesque competition *Starlet of New Zealand*, she's part of a generation of queer performers who refuse to separate humour from honesty. Her solo show *Bottom Surgery* combines comedy, cabaret and storytelling to explore the joys and frustrations of gender-affirming surgery. But as she makes clear, the work is much bigger than one show.

"I didn't originally think *Bottom Surgery* was going to be a comedy," Lily says. "I thought it would be this serious, dramatic piece. But comedy's what I know. I wanted audiences to know that I was okay, and that getting surgery, as frustrating and difficult as it was, was unequivocally good. Especially for trans folk – I wanted them to get comfort, not fear."

THE JOKE LANDS FIRST, THEN THE CONVERSATION STARTS

Humour, for Lily, is a form of diplomacy. She's performed her material in spaces that aren't always overtly trans-friendly, and yet the laughter has a way of clearing the air. "I've had really wonderful conversations with people after shows," she says. "People seem to genuinely appreciate me turning up. Making people laugh first makes it easier to start having the difficult conversations."

That balance between levity and gravity mirrors what it's like to navigate the New Zealand healthcare system as a trans person. Gender-affirming healthcare here is still largely decentralised, often dubbed a "postcode

lottery": depending on where you live, wait times stretch into many years. According to data from *Counting Ourselves*, New Zealand's survey of trans and non-binary people, 71 percent of respondents who sought gender-affirming care reported facing barriers to access – from long waits to a lack of knowledgeable providers. Lily knows that limbo too well.

"My worst interaction with the system was getting a letter from the Ministry of Health," she recalls. It inspired a scene in *Bottom Surgery*. "They couldn't tell me where I was on the waitlist or how long it would take... but they did say 'I hadn't even been on it for that long'. It had already been three years!"

THE FUNDRAISER THAT CHANGED EVERYTHING

That email, in a strange way, sparked Lily's creative momentum. "I was so angry I knew I needed to go private," she says. "So I put on a fundraiser show, and then some news outlets were interested, and suddenly I was in the news talking about being trans. Then I wrote *Bottom Surgery* because people were curious. It's all just been one wild ride."



“They couldn’t tell me where I was on the waitlist or how long it would take, but they did say ‘I hadn’t even been on it for that long’. It had already been three years!”

ON STAGE, ON HER OWN TERMS

Born and raised in Tāmaki Makaurau, Lily describes a sheltered, suburban upbringing. “I mostly stayed inside and played video games,” she says with a laugh. “My parents were anxious and didn’t like me being away from home. But I had really supportive teachers and chill classmates – and I miss the Asian food a lot.”

That grounded sense of normalcy filters through her comedy. Despite often being the only Asian trans woman in the room, she doesn’t dwell on marginalisation as her identity’s defining note. “A lot of the issues I come up against are about what’s wrong with the system, not about how it interacts with me specifically,” she says. “I’m articulate, I’m from here, I feel seen for the most part. But I do look around and notice there aren’t many people like me, and that can be a little weird.”

Her artistic path has also been one of reclaiming the body – something that’s perhaps ironic given burlesque’s visual emphasis. “Honestly, I think stand-up has probably helped me more than burlesque,” she admits. “I used to be

self-conscious about my voice. I never did voice training, and that stopped me from performing for a long time. But in stand-up you’re using your voice constantly, so it was like exposure therapy. I’ve gotten more comfortable using it.”

COMEDY AS COMFORT AND CONNECTION

If there’s a thesis to Lily Catastrophe’s art, it’s that comedy can be both comforting and catalytic. She doesn’t approach audiences as students to be lectured to, but as co-conspirators in curiosity. “I like when audiences are cheering and engaged. For cis audiences, I want them to understand that I’m trans and for the most part I’m just living my life. For trans audiences, I want them to feel seen, because trans audiences are particularly underserved in the arts. They want to experience live theatre too!”

That gap between being seen and being served runs through all her reflections on the arts industry. “A big part of support for trans artists looks the same as support for all artists – building a sustainable, well-funded arts sector

that pays people properly,” she says. “But also, there need to be spaces for trans folk to perform to other trans folk. Venues should be openly and loudly backing us when they invite us in, so we know it’s safe to be there.”

THE BIGGER PICTURE

Lily Catastrophe’s work isn’t just about one woman’s experience with gender affirmation or one show’s success. It’s about re-centring trans voices in Aotearoa’s cultural and political landscape, where they’ve too often been discussed rather than heard.

“Being on the waitlist feels like your life is literally on pause,” she says. “People might understand that feeling from other surgeries – knowing something could make your life better but having no idea how long it’ll take. It’s not just your body waiting – it’s your future.”

Lily Catastrophe’s *Bottom Surgery* plays at Auckland’s Basement Theatre from 25 to 29 November.

basementtheatre.co.nz

PEER-LED AND POWERFUL: INSIDE AUCKLAND'S REVOLUTIONARY NEW STI CLINIC

Oliver Hall talks to Body Positive Executive Director Mark Fisher about the organisation's new sexual health clinic, Test'n'Treat, and how this community-first model is changing healthcare in Aotearoa New Zealand.

It's a sunny Thursday afternoon on Karangahape Road, and you've just turned onto Poynton Terrace to walk into a sexual health clinic. But this isn't like any clinic you've been to before. There's no harsh lighting. No receptionist giving side-eye. No form asking how many partners you've had. Instead, a friendly peer invites you to take a seat, grab a cuppa, and tells you the nurse is in.

This is Test'n'Treat, Aotearoa's first peer-led sexual health clinic, and it might just be the future of STI care. Launched by long-standing community organisation Body Positive, the service offers rapid testing for common STIs, and in many cases, same-day treatment, all without appointments or judgement. It's free, status-neutral, inclusive, and designed to feel like it belongs to the people it serves.

At the heart of the operation is Benji, a trained peer tester who guides clients through the process — from sample collection to delivering results. With clinical oversight from Auckland Sexual Health Services and backing from Te Whatu Ora – Health NZ, the clinic represents a powerful collaboration between community leadership and medical infrastructure. 'Quietly revolutionary' you might whisper.



Mark Fisher (centre)

A NEW KIND OF CLINIC

Body Positive CEO Mark Fisher describes Test'n'Treat as a "clinic that meets people where they are." That means no judgement, no gatekeeping, and no clinical coldness.

"We've already seen strong engagement from people who may be hesitant to access traditional, clinical sexual health services," he explains. "Many clients tell us they feel more comfortable testing in a community-led, peer-based environment that is non-judgemental, affirming, and safer."

The clinic's testing workflow is surprisingly simple. Clients check in on a tablet, collect their own swabs in a private bathroom, and then sit down with Benji for a one-on-one, status-neutral conversation. "That just means we don't make assumptions," Mark says. "It's about care, not judgement."

Clients can receive instant results for HIV, Hepatitis C and syphilis, while chlamydia



and gonorrhoea are processed on-site by Benji using a GeneXpert machine, a compact lab-grade PCR platform that returns accurate results in about 90 minutes. If someone tests positive, they're referred to the on-site nurse for immediate treatment — pills or injections included.

This "test and treat" model significantly shortens the time between diagnosis and care, a critical move in a country where STIs like syphilis are surging and delays can compound risk.

"1 IN 4 OF OUR CLIENTS HAVE NEVER HAD AN STI TEST BEFORE"

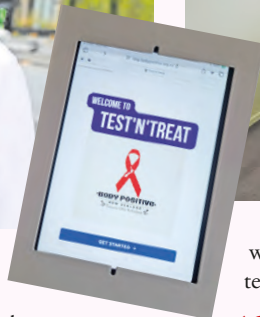
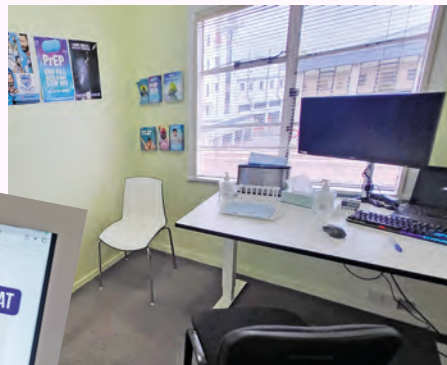
While the technology is impressive, the soul of the clinic is Benji. More than a tester, he's a listener, an educator, and often the first person a client speaks to about sex and health in a supportive setting.

"All of our staff have been trained to provide point-of-care testing," Mark explains. "That includes hands-on training by Cepheid, who

SEXUAL HEALTH



Benji



we offer vaccinations, prevention, and testing — and it's all free.”

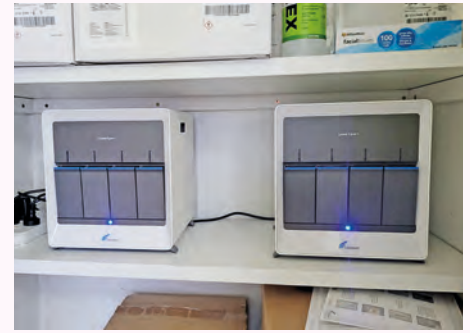
ACCESS, EQUITY, AND K RD

Though based in central Auckland, Test'n'Treat's reach is wide — both physically and symbolically. It's not just a clinic, it's an invitation to rethink what sexual health care looks and feels like.

“We've been part of the K Rd community for over 30 years,” Mark says. “This clinic helps us reach more of our community — Rainbow people, sex workers, people living with HIV, migrants, people who've had poor experiences with healthcare before.”

Mark is candid about how stigma continues to block access to testing. “Over 50% of gay and bi men in Aotearoa aren't out to their GP,” he says. “That's a massive barrier. You can't access care if you're not even being seen.”

Test'n'Treat was created to address that. With its status-neutral, peer-based model, the clinic strips away shame, awkwardness, and power imbalances.



The service is also fully free, regardless of immigration status. “As we like to say: internationals get STIs too,” Mark laughs. “So everyone is welcome.”

To expand reach, Body Positive is also taking testing on the road — visiting places like CADS (Community Alcohol & Drug Services) in Manukau.

“Our goal is to complement, not replace existing sexual health services,” Mark says. “We are working in close collaboration with Auckland Sexual Health Services, who are providing clinical support... This peer-led model offers an alternative access point for people who may be reluctant to engage with conventional clinical environments.”

“We've already had interest from local GPs in collaborating, and we welcome opportunities to strengthen referral pathways and share resources across the sector,” he tells us.

WHAT SUCCESS LOOKS LIKE

For Mark, success isn't just numbers — though they're watching those too. It's about who walks through the door.

“We'll know it's working when people come back and bring their friends. When testing becomes normal. When stigma drops. When someone says, “This was the first time I felt safe getting tested.””

Test'n'Treat is currently funded until June 2026, with an evaluation planned for next year. If successful, it could become a blueprint for peer-led care across Aotearoa.

“Ultimately, success means building a trusted, community-led service that improves access to sexual health care for those who need it most,” Mark tells us.

As for Benji, his job is more than collecting samples. It's helping build a future where testing is no longer something to dread — but something you do because you care about yourself and your community.

Body Positive is located at 1/3 Poynton Terrace in Newton, Auckland, and operates as a drop-in centre Mon–Wed 10am–5pm, Thurs 10am–8pm, and 10am–4pm on Fridays.

bodypositive.org.nz/testntreat

manufacture the GeneXpert machine.

We work closely with Auckland Sexual Health for clinical oversight, and all of our positive samples are being retested — with 100% concordance so far.”

Benji guides clients through the testing process with warmth and discretion. For many, this is their first time ever getting tested. “Early data shows that 1 in 4 of our clients have never had an STI test before,” Mark says. “That's huge. That means we're reaching the people who've been left behind.”

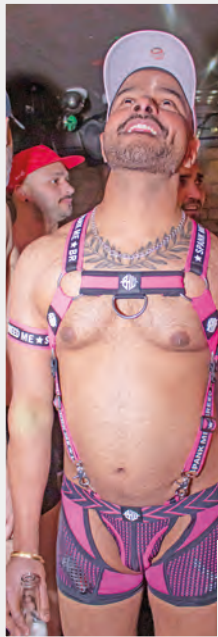
Benji's role also includes processing lab samples, delivering results, and offering counselling or next-step support. If treatment is needed, he transitions the client to the nurse. But if not, he might discuss PrEP, PEP, DoxyPEP, or vaccinations like Mpox — all of which are available onsite.

“It's a one-stop shop for your sexual health needs,” Mark says. “We're cold chain certified,

OUT & ABOUT

UNDERWEAR ON, INHIBITIONS OFF

Urge Events brought the heat to G.A.Y Auckland with another unforgettable instalment of their legendary Underwear Party, winding up Labour Weekend. The crowd was a sea of men of all ages celebrating body confidence, connection, and community, where less really is more! If you didn't make it, don't worry, the next big one is locked in. Urge celebrates its 28th Birthday on Saturday 22 November at Phoenix Cabaret on K Road. It's going to be massive!



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PHOTOS | JASMIN SHEIKH

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MANCHESTER: THE CITY THAT BELONGS TO THE PEOPLE

Oliver Hall discovers Manchester doesn't whisper its brilliance — it belts it out like Liam Gallagher

It's a city that hums with history and house music, where drag queens and factory workers share the same cultural DNA. The fastest-growing city in Europe, Manchester has always known how to turn the patriarchy on its head. In the mid-1800s, when the North-West's textile mills gave women income and independence, it sparked a civic personality that still thrives today: industrious, inventive and gloriously rebellious.

We arrived by train from Edinburgh Waverley, watching the landscape shift from Scottish stone to northern soul. It felt poetic: leaving one festival — Edinburgh Fringe — and arriving for another, on one of those gloriously windy journeys that make the UK rail network feel like a sightseeing tour. As the train curved through Pennine peaks and red-brick towns, I could already sense Manchester's energy on the horizon.



Gay Village.

STAY & PLAY @ MOXY MANCHESTER

Our home base was the playful and perfectly placed Moxy Manchester (@moxymcr). A neon-lit playground of social spaces, bold art and mischievous décor, it's the kind of hotel that winks at you when you walk in. Downstairs is all cocktails, board games and people actually talking to each other (wild, right?), while upstairs, rooms are clever and comfortable — industrial chic with soft edges.

CAFFEINE & COBBLESTONES

Our first morning kicked off with caffeine from Bold Street Coffee (@boldstreetcoffee) — a Liverpool import now thriving in Manchester's Spinningfields neighbourhood. It's a slice of modern café culture with substance: expertly brewed flat whites, hearty toasties and a queue of locals who clearly know their beans. The surrounding Spinningfields neighbourhood blends high finance with high fun; shiny

TRAVEL



Moxy Manchester.

glass towers share pavements with colourful restaurants and bars, creating the perfect warm-up for a long Pride weekend.

DECADENCE ON A PLATE

You don't go to Manchester to eat meekly. You go to The Ivy Spinningfields (@the_ivy_collection) for British dining turned art form. Their roof terrace, complete with a retractable ceiling, transforms even a grey-skied northern afternoon into something cinematic. Think truffle-drenched fries, cocktails that could double as décor, and a dining room so plush it makes Gatsby look minimalist. The staff glide, the playlist bops, and you feel you've entered a fever dream of foliage and flair.

GLITZ, GLAM & GRILL

If The Ivy is whimsical, Sexy Fish Manchester (@sexyfish_manchester) is a maximalist fantasy. A Japanese-inspired temple to sushi, sashimi and Robata-grilled everything, it's where art, appetite and excess collide. The coral-lit interiors glitter, the seafood sings, and, on this particular weekend, it also happened to host the Manchester Pride 2025 launch party. Cue drag, DJs and enough sequins to blind a bishop.

PRIDE FOR THE PEOPLE

Manchester Pride (@manchesterpride) is not just a festival — it's a declaration.

Every August Bank Holiday, the city transforms into a four-day celebration that stretches from the Gay Village and beyond. 2025's edition (22–25 August) introduced a brand-new Mardi Gras — a high-glam, high-energy, high-queer extravaganza starring Billy Porter, Gok Wan and Nelly Furtado — alongside Village headliners Sister Sledge, B*Witched, Samantha Mumba and Danny Beard.

When the Parade rolled through the streets, we shouted until we lost our voices. When Mardi Gras turned Depot Mayfield into a fever dream of sequins and sweat, we danced until our legs gave out. When the Candlelit Vigil filled Sackville Gardens with quiet light, we cried, hugged strangers and remembered why Pride matters.



Manchester Pride Parade.

THE GAY VILLAGE: CANAL STREET CALLING

The Gay Village is Manchester's queer heart. Anchoring it all is Canal Street, made world-famous by *Queer As Folk* but kept alive by Mancunians themselves. Across one cobblestoned strip you'll find an entire ecosystem of queer spaces including: Molly House for tapas and plush sofas; Via for drag, DJs and that glorious mix of locals and tourists; Eagle for late-night liberation; Vanilla for women who love women; Richmond Tea Rooms for *Alice in Wonderland* whimsy; Oscars for musical-theatre and cocktails; New York New York for karaoke that could raise the dead.

Each bar has a personality; together they form the beating heart of queer Manchester — a community hub, not just a nightlife novelty.



Walking Tour Guide Josh.

A WALK THROUGH QUEER HISTORY

Want to understand why this city loves so loudly? Book the Queer History & Culture Manchester Walking Tour (@LGBTTour_MCR).

Our guide, Josh, led us through decades of hidden drag, police raids and protest marches. We learned Polari phrases whispered in bars when queerness was illegal, and we stood in the same streets where activists demanded rights decades before hashtags existed. Standing under rainbow flags, we heard how Manchester fought for decriminalisation, built one of the UK's largest LGBTQ+ communities, and continues

CONTINUED...

TRAVEL

... CONTINUED

to celebrate that fight every year through Pride, the Pink Picnic, and Sparkle Weekend — the world's biggest trans celebration.

This tour is moving, mischievous and quintessentially Mancunian — full of humour even in hardship.

A CITY BUILT BY THE PEOPLE

Manchester wears its history like glitter — boldly and everywhere.

At **The People's History Museum** (@phmmcr), banners of suffrage and socialism hang beside Pride flags. This is where the trade union movement began, where ideas worth fighting for have always had a home. Their August Pride Trail links today's queer struggles with yesterday's labour ones, showing how intertwined liberation truly is. The stat declared on one wall still echoes in my mind: there are 136,000 victims of slavery living in the UK today — a sobering reminder that activism never ends.

From there, we marvelled at the neo-Gothic **John Rylands Library** (@thejohnrylands) — a cathedral of learning — and stepped into the **Royal Exchange Theatre** (@rxtheatre), where a futuristic sphere of performance sits inside a Grade II trading hall. The theatre's round stage symbolises perfectly what Manchester stands for: performance in the middle of the people, not above them.

CORRIE, CAMP & CULTURE

Of course, no visit is complete without walking the famous cobbles at the **Coronation Street Experience** (@coronationstreetexperience).

Our flamboyant guide, Scott, deserved his own Bafta for delivering gossip, trivia and camp aplenty as we toured the world's longest-running TV soap set at MediaCity in Salford — home to the BBC and ITV. Filming 50 weeks a year, five days a week, *Corrie* proves once again: this is a city that creates culture for the masses, not the elite. For over 11,000 episodes, *Corrie* has been Manchester in microcosm: ordinary lives with extraordinary heart.



The Ivy Spinningfields.



The Coronation Street Experience.



Drag Street Art.



The Ivy's interior.



Royal Exchange Theatre.



John Rylands Library.

NEIGHBOURHOOD LOVE

The Northern Quarter and Ancoats are ground zero for indie spirit — street art, vegan cafés, small galleries and grit with glamour. **Afflecks** (@afflecks_manchester), the legendary maze of alternative shops, is pure queer treasure: from vintage jackets to handmade jewellery, it's impossible to leave empty-handed.

These neighbourhoods remind you that Manchester's cool isn't curated — it's community-grown. Every mural feels like a manifesto. Every latte (try lesbian-owned *Ezra & Gill*) tastes like defiance.

A PEOPLE'S CITY

What sets Manchester apart isn't just its Pride — it's its politics of belonging.

This is the city that gave us Emmeline Pankhurst, Alan Turing and The Smiths; that split the atom, invented the computer and inspired Oasis anthems. It's where ideas and idealists coexist, often in the same pub.

London dazzles with polish; Manchester glows with purpose. The former bows to aristocracy; the latter raises a pint to humanity.

As my train rolled out of Piccadilly, the city's skyline glimmered under post-Pride sunshine. I concluded that Manchester isn't about

grandeur or gatekeeping, but inclusion, activism and artistry. It's a place where history meets hedonism, and where regular people, not elites — still — run the show.

So come for Pride, stay for the people, and leave knowing in a world obsessed with Kings, Manchester reminds us that the real power has always belonged to those who show up, speak out and dance on the cobbles.

This trip was supported by **Visit Britain** visitbritain.com @lovegreatbritain & Marketing Manchester visitmanchester.com @VisitManchester

We flew into Edinburgh and our of London on United Airlines united.com

OUT & ABOUT

EAGLE: WHERE QUEER NIGHTS TAKE FLIGHT

Eagle Bar is the beating heart of K Road's queer scene — where friends gather, music flows, and the vibes are always high. With its relaxed atmosphere, strong pours, and classic Kiwi hospitality, Eagle remains a go-to for anyone looking to unwind, connect, and celebrate community in one of Auckland's most iconic LGBTQ+ spaces.



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

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REFINED. RADIANT. UNMISTAKABLY YOU:

MEET KEV OF KEV AESTHETICS NZ

*When you meet **Kevin Barratt** — Kev, as he introduces himself warmly — you don't just meet a cosmetic injector. You meet a storyteller working in skin, confidence, and quiet transformation.*

The founder of Kev Aesthetics NZ (KANZ), Kev moves between Auckland's Grey Lynn and the sweeping coastline of Russell in Northland. He carries not just syringes and serums, but something far more powerful: intention.

A Registered Nurse by training, Kev has always been grounded in science, but he admits that something was missing. "Healthcare and science have always been a part of my world," he says. "But I realised pretty quickly I was craving something more creative." Injectables offered that perfect hybrid — medical precision with artistic vision. "It's medicine, but magic," he grins.

For Kev, aesthetics is never about generating carbon-copy faces. "Every face has a story,"

he reflects. "From the very beginning, I knew it was more than just injecting. It's about helping someone look and feel more refreshed — like themselves, but lighter." His process is collaborative, deeply personal, and built around celebrating identity rather than masking it.

As a gay man in an industry that can often lean heavily into rigid ideals of beauty, Kev's perspective feels not just refreshing, but necessary. "I've grown up knowing that beauty has no single blueprint," he says. "My identity helps me see beyond binaries: masculine, feminine, 'before' and 'after'. Whether you want sharper, softer, louder or subtler features, it's about what makes you feel powerful, not what society expects."

That philosophy has become the backbone of Kev Aesthetics NZ, a space intentionally designed with queer and gender-diverse clients in mind. "Many LGBTQ+ clients have had experiences where they didn't feel seen," Kev says. "At KANZ, safety means more than sterile needles. It's emotional safety too." From pronouns to aesthetic goals, Kev ensures clients are met with respect, warmth and zero judgement. "It's a vibe thing," he laughs. "I am who I am, and you can totes be who you are."

Services at KANZ include anti-wrinkle treatments, dermal fillers, skin boosters and more. All are offered with a focus on comfort,

accessibility and natural results. Kev loves debunking the myths that linger around injectables. First up? Pain. "With the right technique — and a little magic numbing — most clients are surprised at how quick and comfortable it is." Then there's the belief that aesthetic treatments are only for celebrities. "Wrong again," he says. "Treatments can be staged and tailored to different budgets. It's not about extravagance, it's about investing in confidence." And the most persistent fear? Looking "fake". Kev smiles. "Only if you go to someone who doesn't get you."

His clients clearly feel that difference. One story sticks with him. "A client came in post-breakup," Kev shares. "They'd lost their sparkle. We did some subtle restorative work: soft filler, skin boosters, anti-wrinkle. At the end, I handed them the mirror and they burst into happy tears. We hugged for the longest time. I live for those moments."

Despite the travel between regions, he says the miles are worth it. "The beautiful connections I get to make with people across Auckland and Northland, that keeps me energised," he says. "KANZ isn't just a service. It's a community energy."

So, what does he want his queer clients — and anyone considering a treatment — to know? His message is clear: "You are already enough. If you want to celebrate yourself, reclaim your glow or rewrite how you present to the world, do it for you. Nobody else."

In a world that often tries to define beauty for us, Kev Aesthetics NZ offers something braver: a reminder that beauty, like identity, is personal, expressive and yours to command.



KEV AESTHETICS NZ (KANZ)



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UNIQUE SCENTS & STIMULATED SCALPS

Summer calls for sensory adventures — fragrances that linger like memories, and haircare that gives your scalp the same energy you bring to a Pride dance floor. Whether you're craving an eco-conscious spritz or a minty tingle of motivation, these are the standout products putting ethics and energy front and centre.



Jo Malone London Sandalwood & Spiced Apricot Cologne 100ml – \$299 – Available at Mecca Jo Malone's limited-edition scent of the season is all sunlit ease — light, chic, and quietly addictive. The creamy warmth of sandalwood meets apricot brightness in a blend that slips seamlessly from brunch to beach to bar. | **Glasshouse Kyoto in Bloom 100ml – \$149 – Available at Farmers** Think spring in a bottle: airy white florals meet creamy vanilla and sandalwood, with whispers of amber and green notes. Romantic without being fussy, this poetic scent feels like wandering through an illuminated garden at dusk. | **LUSH Liberation Bath Bomb \$13.50** Celebrate trans lives with this layered bath bomb in the pink, blue and white of the trans flag. Its sweet American Cream scent blends vanilla absolute and benzoin resin, while 75% of the sales price (minus tax) is donated to Gender Minorities Aotearoa. Proof that self-care can make real-world change. | **LUSH Guardians of the Forest Body Spray 200ml – \$70** Imagine a rainforest after a heavy shower — earthy oakmoss, crisp cypress and juicy lime. This self-preserving, vegan spray is made with regeneratively farmed sugarcane ethanol and bottled in 98% recycled plastic. It's as sustainable as it is sublime. | **LUSH Vegan Leather Jacket Perfume 100ml – \$160** Smoky, spicy and rebellious. With clove, tonka and tobacco absolute, this scent channels late-night rock gigs — minus the leather. Inspired by The Byrds and made for anyone who prefers their attitude vegan.

Stimulated Scalps

LUSH Wasabi Shampoo 250ml – \$48 Supercharge your follicles with wasabi, horseradish and caffeine. This invigorating shampoo thickens with sea salt, nourishes with olive oil, and gives your scalp that “wake-up call” feeling you didn't know you needed. | **LUSH Roots Hair Treatment 225g – \$40** Tingle your way to hair health with peppermint, spearmint and honey. Triple mint stimulation boosts circulation while grapefruit and neroli keep things fresh and glossy. Apply generously, chill for 20 minutes, rinse — and prepare for compliments. | **LUSH Valkyrie Conditioner 225g – \$50** Strong, smooth and silicone-free, this biodegradable conditioner swaps synthetic coatings for macadamia-derived shine. Aquafaba strengthens, olive oil hydrates — your hair gets goddess-level revival without the guilt. | **LUSH Ginger Shampoo 275g – \$44** This anti-dandruff icon blends ginger, sea salt, piroctone olamine and Fairly Traded honey to clarify, soothe and soften. Reformulated for a new era, it's scalp care that's ethical, effective and 100% Lush in spirit.



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Today, teams across Aotearoa are rethinking what the office means. Whether it's a local government department in Wellington, a business association in Auckland, or an expanding company in Christchurch, one thing remains constant: people want to feel good at work.

A well-designed, ergonomic workspace isn't just about posture — it's about culture. When staff have comfortable, supportive furniture and thoughtful layouts, they're happier, healthier, and more connected. In an era of hybrid work, that connection matters more than ever. A better workplace helps draw people back into the office, not because they have to be there but because they want to be part of the community that thrives there.

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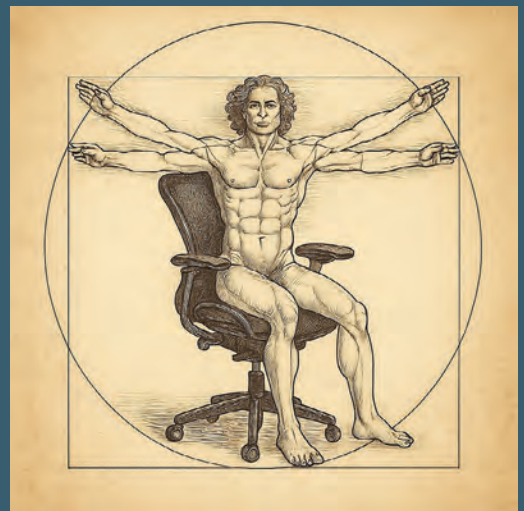
So, if your workspace still feels a bit tired — chairs past their prime, desks that don't quite fit, or spaces that don't inspire — it's time for a refresh. We've helped hundreds of New Zealand workplaces evolve, and we'd love to help yours do the same.

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NOT EVERYTHING NEEDS EXPLAINING:

THE SUBTLE RADICALISM OF XIN JI

Contemporary dancer Xin Ji speaks to YOUR EX about letting your body tell its own story, the generosity of regional audiences, and making art without apology.

When *Body Story* appeared at the Nelson Arts Festival, something subtly powerful happened. Rather than presenting a neat narrative, choreographer Xin Ji offered an intimate mapping of the unseen — a quiet invitation to consider the body not just as a tool for performance but as a place that remembers.

“I started noticing how the body holds things long after the mind forgets,” Xin reflects. “Small memories, habits, even traces of places I’ve been. *Body Story* really began when I realised those invisible layers were shaping how I move, how I rest, and how I react.” It wasn’t one defining epiphany, but a gradual recognition — that choreography could arise from what lingers beneath language.

Born in Lanzhou, China, and later trained at both the Beijing Dance Academy and Unitec in Tāmaki Makaurau, Xin has become a distinctive presence in Aotearoa’s contemporary dance landscape. His body of work spans major companies including Footnote, Okāreka, Muscle Mouth, Borderline Arts Ensemble, Movement of the Human, and New Zealand Dance Company. *Body Story* marked his first major solo work, a significant shift in his artistic trajectory.

Bringing the piece to Nelson held personal resonance. “Nelson has always had a special place for me. Every time I’ve performed at the

Theatre Royal, it has felt like such a well-built community that truly values and supports the arts,” he says. He speaks with equal affection about drifting through the Suter Gallery and weekend markets, taking in the local rhythm of makers and craftspeople. “Sharing *Body Story* there felt like offering something personal in a place that already knows how to hold it gently.”

Performing outside Aotearoa’s main centres, he observes, creates a different kind of exchange. “People come in with fewer preconceived ideas about me or what I do. The audience responds more instinctively and honestly, and that’s really refreshing. You get to step outside your usual bubble and see how the work lands.”

Integral to *Body Story* is the presence of musician Alistair Deverick, who performs live onstage. Rather than functioning as background score, his drumming becomes a second body in dialogue with Xin’s movements. “It’s about letting the audience see how movement, sound and rhythm come together right there in real time,” Xin says. “That layered energy can open the door for people who might not usually step into contemporary dance.”

While often named as a significant queer voice in the arts, Xin approaches his identity without performance. “I don’t feel the need to explain queerness — it’s already in the way I create,

the way I connect with people, and the way I see things. It’s just me being me, and that feels enough.”

His view of Aotearoa’s dance ecology is thoughtful but frank. “Support exists, but it’s pretty fragile. Many artists are just surviving between projects, and that instability really shapes the kind of risks we can take.” Recently awarded the Creative Fellowship from the Asian Artist Fund, Xin describes it as a reminder of what genuine support feels like. “Real support means long-term trust, space to grow, fail, and evolve over time. More of that kind of backing would make a huge difference for our field.”

Despite the intensity of performing a work drawn from personal memory, his self-care is deliberately ordinary. “I’ll burn some incense at home while I stretch, or stop by my favourite café for something sweet. Little things like that, things that have nothing to do with dancing, remind me I’ve got a life outside of performing.”

Body Story might be a solo, but it carries the shape of a life lived across borders, communities and artforms — proof that sometimes the most resonant stories don’t arrive all at once but surface slowly through the body.

Follow Xin Ji on Instagram @xin_with_ji



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

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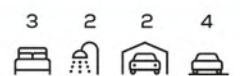
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