

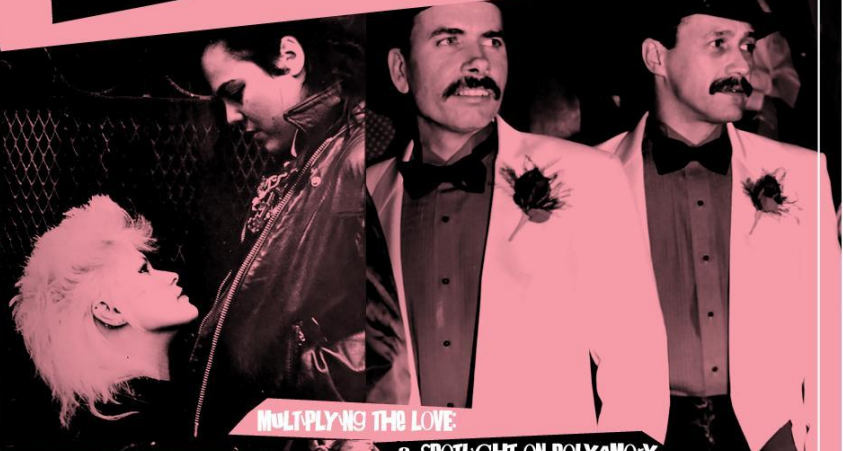
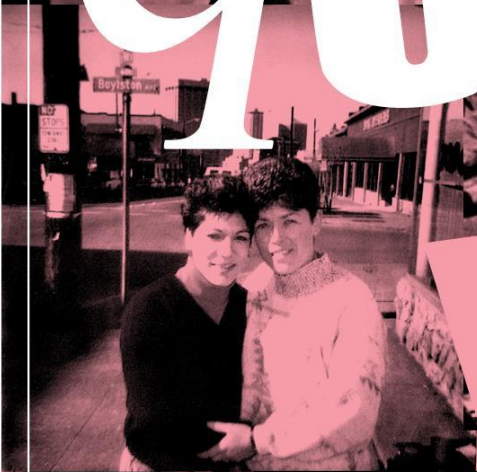


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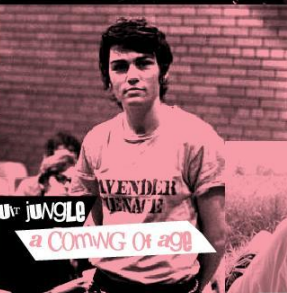
LOVE!



MULTIPLYING THE LOVE
a SPOTLIGHT ON POLYAMORY



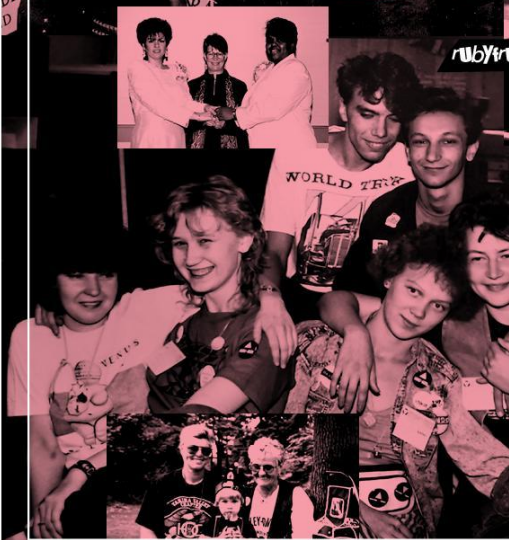
QUEER LOVE
Through The AGES



RUBY IN THE JUNGLE
a COMING OF AGE



8 QUEER ROMANCE FILMS
recs. by RE-ARON&P \$ & US



Swan Lake



LOVE NOTES
by Our Readers

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The NEWS!

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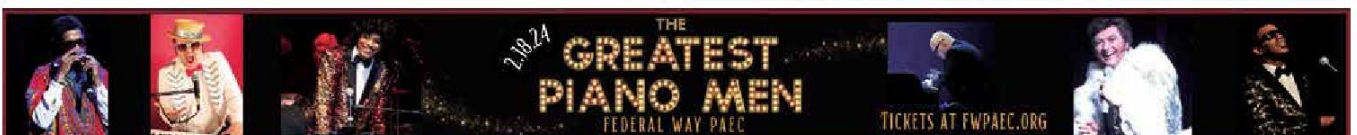
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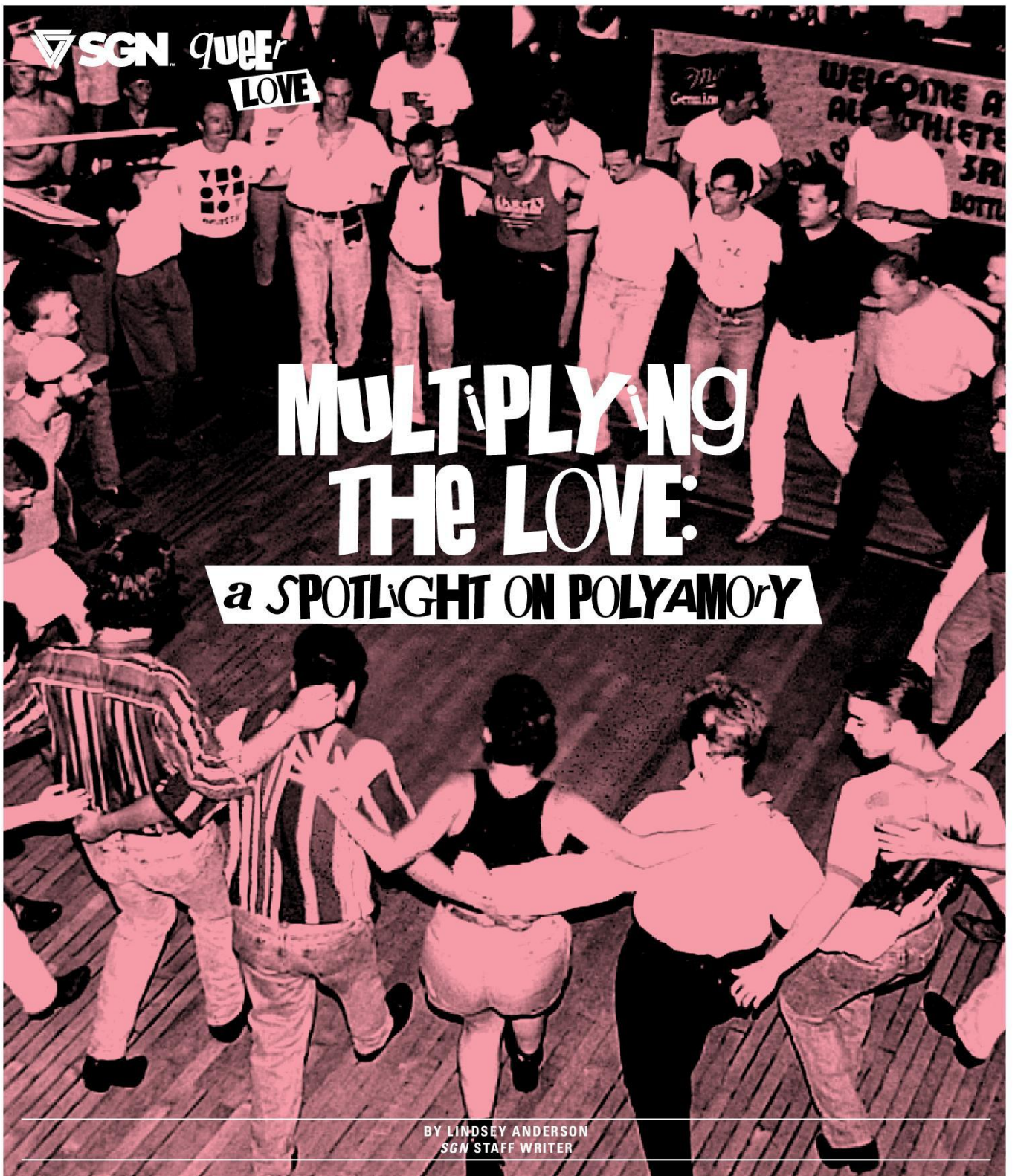
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BY LINDSEY ANDERSON
SGN STAFF WRITER

OVER THE LAST DECADE, POLYAMORY HAS BECOME MORE WIDELY ACCEPTED AND POPULAR IN AMERICAN CULTURE. UNSURPRISINGLY, LGBTQ+ PEOPLE HAVE BEEN LEADING THE PACK, EMBRACING ALTERNATIVES TO TRADITIONAL FORMS OF MONOGAMY AND MULTIPLYING THE LOVE IN THEIR LIVES.

Over the last decade, polyamory has become more widely accepted and popular in American culture. Unsurprisingly, LGBTQ+ people have been leading the pack, embracing alternatives to traditional forms of monogamy and multiplying the love in their lives.

However, with minimal representation of it in media and sometimes negative connotations, especially from the conservative right, the journey to finding acceptance and community with a polyamorous identity can be difficult.

Emma started dating her partner Andrew three years ago after meeting on Feeld and becoming good friends. Since she had never been a strong proponent of monogamy, she was hesitant to embrace the label of “polyamorous” at first.

“I’ve never really been great at monogamy, and most of my adult relationships have been nonmonogamous in some form,” she said. “I resisted the label of polyamorous for a long time, mostly because I just

didn’t mesh with any of the poly people I met, so [I thought] I couldn’t be like them. I’m not into tabletop board games. I’ll never go to Burning Man. They just didn’t feel like my people.

“It wasn’t until I started to fall for Andrew that I recognized I had not only capacity but intense desire to cultivate multiple loving romantic relationships, so I begrudgingly accepted the label of polyamorous.”

Eventually, Emma met Aliah, a college senior, on Tinder. At first, their relationship was fun and casual, two young people exploring their early twenties — and Emma had the perfect couch for Aliah to crash on after long trips to Seattle for roller derby. As the two grew into themselves, their relationship evolved as well.

“I was young and still exploring who I was and what I liked and wanted in relationships,” Aliah said. “Our relationship fluctuated from open to nonmonogamous to solidly polyamorous as we grew up and figured out what worked.”



True selves

For many people, the journey to polyamory has coincided with growing into their true selves. “Seven years ago, I was straight and monogamous and married — holdovers from a conservative, evangelical upbringing,” Andrew said. “I wasn’t happy about how my life looked and wanted more sexual exploration.”

After getting divorced, Andrew started exploring polyamory in Seattle and eventually his Queer identity. “I found polyamory for its promise of sexual freedom and exploration,” he continued, “but now, after six-plus years, I couldn’t imagine doing relationships any other way: the joy of more abundant love, the personal growth, and the deeper relationships with friends and partners have all kept me pursuing polyamorous relationships.”

Through polyamory, Emma, Andrew, and Aliah have found the freedom to explore different versions of themselves with the various people who bring them out. Together, Emma and Andrew shine as social butterflies, hosting stellar parties for holidays and birthdays. With Aliah, Emma enjoys the quieter sides of life. “A perfect day in our relationship is waking up early to hit some estate sales, getting brunch, and then ending the night on the couch with our pets, watching a documentary,” Aliah said.

While Andrew and Aliah aren’t dating each other (they each have other partners), they still share a deep friendship and mutual love for the people in their lives. “I love that I get to bear witness to Andrew and Aliah’s beautiful friendship,” Emma said. “They support each other’s relationships with me, but they also support one another as individuals. The three of us are a family, and while it’s not traditional, it is spectacular.”

Growth and learning

Opening themselves up to the possibilities of love all around has encouraged

growth in Emma, Andrew, and Aliah’s personal lives and relationships. “I grow so much through my relationships, and being polyamorous has given me even more opportunities to grow,” Andrew said. Holding space for multiple relationships means he can process feedback from his partners easily, especially when multiple people tell him the same thing. Andrew’s relationships have also helped him to process his big emotions.

For Aliah, polyamory is about exploring the different dynamics each relationship brings. “I discover and nourish different sides of myself in every relationship I am in. It is so cool to see how I show up and what others bring to each dynamic,” she said. Polyamory has also helped her become a more confident, independent, and self-assured person.

For Emma, polyamory is about learning what trust and love look like in relationships, each of which has brought her closer to herself. “I’ve done a whole lot of growing (and growing up) in these two relationships,” she said.

When Emma first started dating Andrew, she identified as a Lesbian. “I didn’t ever trust or like men,” she said. “And I certainly couldn’t ever see myself falling in love with a man.” Her relationship with Andrew opened Emma up not only to the possibilities of polyamory but also to the idea that people can be surprising. “He showed me that men can be kind, gentle, and soft. He showed me the type of man that I adore,” Emma said.

While Andrew taught Emma to accept kindness from others, Aliah helped her discover how to provide kindness to herself. “I met Aliah at a pivotal moment in my life,” Emma said. “I was depressed, had an unhealthy relationship with substances, and lacked any kind of direction. I always say she didn’t heal me, she gave me a reason to want to heal myself. I’m so grateful for that.”

“THERE IS SOMETHING SO SPECIAL ABOUT BEING IN A GROUP OF PEOPLE THAT ARE ALL INTERWOVEN AND CONNECTED IN SO MANY INTIMATE WAYS, NEVER MIND [WHO] CAN ALL SHOW UP AND SUPPORT ONE ANOTHER AND SHARE THE LOAD OF COMMUNITY CARE.”

Mutual support

Two years ago, Emma received the devastating news that her father’s health was rapidly declining. While she got on the first plane she could, Aliah and Andrew found comfort in each other.

“I called Aliah to ask how she was doing, and we ended up hanging out and keeping each other company that evening,” Andrew recalled. “It was really nice — hanging out with each other was a welcome distraction from the tragedy at hand. We could both be present whenever Emma called to check in, and it all felt like the best way to support each other while our shared partner was in crisis. Despite the sadness of the situation, that felt really special and a unique moment in a relationship like this.”

“This, to me, is an example of my absolute favorite part of polyamory: the community,” Aliah added. “There is something so special about being in a group of people that are all interwoven and connected in so many intimate ways, [who] can all show up and support one another and share the load of community care.”

While their relationships, like any, are full of complexities, the moments full of love make it worth it. “I won’t pretend that polyamory is always easy. It’s not,” Emma said. “It’s relationships on hard mode, and that can be painful, complicated, and messy. But moments like this remind me that it is so worth it.”

FROM fairest
creatures we desire
increase.
That thereby beauty's
rose might never die.
But as the ripen
should by time decrease
His tender heir might
bear his memory.
But thou, contracted to
thine own bright eyes,
Feed'st thy light'st
flame with self-
substantial fuel,
Making a famine
where abundance
Thyself thy foe, making
sweet self too cruel.
Thou that art now the
world's fresh ornament,
And only her
gandy spring,
Within three our bus-
inessiest thy context
And, tender churl,

praise deserved thy
beauty's use.
If thou couldst answer
Upon thyself thy
beauty's legacy?
Nature's bequest gives

beauty were bereft,
Nor it nor no
remembrance what of
was.
But flowers distilled
though they with
meet.
Leese but their show
their substance still
lives sweet

Smiling with looks his
FROM JEN GUMBS
TO JACOB GUMBS
ABERDEEN, WA
It's an extraordinary thing to meet
someone who you can bare your
soul to, and who will accept you for
what you are. I've been waiting what
seems like a very long time to get
beyond what I am. And now, I feel like
I can finally begin. No measure of time
with you will be long enough. But let's
start with forever.
Yet mortal looks adore
his beauty still.
Attending on his
golden pilgrimage.
But when from
highmost pitch, with
weary car,
Like feeble age, he
redeth from the day.
The eyes, fore distant,
now converted are
From his low tract and
look another way.
So thou, thyself out-
going in thy moon,
Unlook'd on best,
unless thou get a you

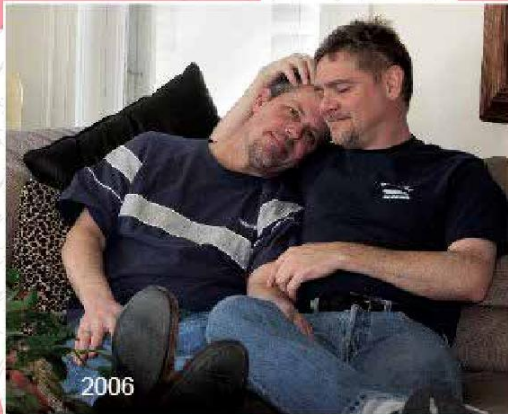


FROM CONNE CLIFFORD

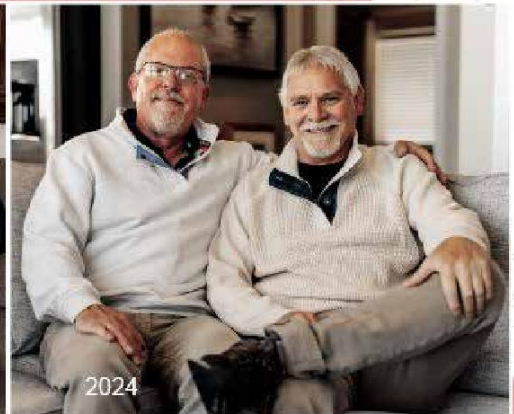
TO JUDY PAKE

Ocean Shores, WA

Our life together began in 1985 in Kansas City, Missouri. You were transferred to Seattle in 1986. In 1987, we all moved to Washington: three daughters, two dogs, and two cats. Now we have five grandkids, two great-grandkids, and one more on the way. Our life has truly been amazing, and I plan on spending many, many more years together. Judy, you are my heart, and I know I'm yours.



2006



2024



Before TikTok and Spotify and all the countless social media platforms, there were the dark ages of the internet, when AOL ruled as king of dial-up (stories could and should be written about this "gay-rassic" period). And then suddenly Gay.com appeared on the horizon as a way to connect, and we cheered in sheer glory of our new ability to be able to connect with others. This is where the adventures of Mike and Steven began. Now you make sure that every chapter in this adventure is covered in some sort of media. It used to drive me crazy all the time spent taking snapshots of us, but now I am thankful for your diligence. But remember one of the first "selfies" I took while we were waiting for our first boat ride together to Lummi Island? Oh, and as for boats, well, that's another story... I love you to the moon and back, across the stormy seas and calm waters. You will always be my Captain Mike.

FROM MIKE
TO STEVEN
Ocean Shores, WA

We met online. I was in a Spokane chat room in October 2005 when you appeared out of the blue in an instant message. You were from Bellingham, across the state, on the Washington coast.

For the following four months, we chatted online, emailed back and forth, and talked on the phone. In February 2006, you flew to Spokane to meet me. I waited nervously in the airport until you finally turned the corner.

"Hi!" you piped with radiant blue eyes and a smile from ear to ear. Your joy took my breath away.

I fell in love with you over the course of getting to know you, through these emails, phone calls, and visits — flying back and forth to be with each other — spanning the ten months we dated. That summer 18 years ago, you sold your home and moved to Spokane to begin your new life with me.

As a thoughtful listener, you're my sounding board and compass when I become lost on distant horizons of new ideas. But wherever I am, whatever I'm doing, with just your smile, you bring me home. I love you, Steven.

pleasing note do sing
Whose speechless songs,
being many, seeming
one.
Sings this to thee
thou single wilt prove
none.

murderous hate
That 'gainst thyself
thou stick'st not to
conspire.
Seeking that beautiful
roof to ruinate
Which to repair
should be thy chief
desire.

cherish
She carved thee for
her zeal, and meant
thereby
Thou shouldst print
more, not let that copy
die.

other give
So should that beauty
which you hold in lease
Find no determination.
When I consider every
thing that grows
fills in perfection but
yourself decrease.

FROM WAFBY
SNOHOMISH CO., WA **TO XANADU**

How do I even begin to put into words
how much you mean to me? I love your
goofy smile and how much we make each
other laugh. I love the home-cooked meals
you make and how much you spoil me.
I love how excited you get about puzzles,
projects, and games. I love how cute it is
when you baby-talk the dogs. I love how we
can be weirdos together.

I didn't believe it was possible to be
this in love with someone and so happy.
Thank you for being my wife and soul-
mate. You are such an impressive, intelli-
gent, and beautiful woman; I can't believe
that I was the one who got to snatch you up.
Thank you for making my life an adventure.
You are my home, my heart, and my
Xanadu.



FROM RCH
KODAW

Happy 16(1/2) and counting, älskling!
Here's to many more to come! Thanks for
all the good times and being there in the
bad. All my love, Motek



FROM LOLO
MONROE, WA **TO PRINCESS**

Five years ago, I made a vow to work
on myself. I didn't know who you were
or if you even existed, but I knew if I met
the "one," I wanted to be the best version
of myself for you. As time went on, and
I slowly healed, the universe decided it
was time for us to meet. I had no idea that
I never knew what it meant to be happy and
at peace until I met you. You have shown
me what it means to be a good person,
through your authenticity and compassion
for those around you. I am truly thank-
ful to have you in my life and to be able to
experience all the things that you bring.
You have given me a life that
allows me to walk around with
a smile on my face every day. I think that
the world would be a better place if every-
one had someone like you in their life.
I hope everyone can some day experi-
ence the type love you have shown me.
— Your Lolo

yourself! but, love, you
are
No longer yours than
you yourself here live
Against this coming
end you should
prepare.
And your sweet
resemblance to some

FROM BAILEY
SPOKANE, WA **TO LUCY**

Knowing you is a privilege. Loving you
is a gift. How lucky am I to be in love with
you in this lifetime. This Valentine's Day,
please be mine. Loving you always, Bailey



WE HAVE always been here.

QUEER LOVE THROUGH THE AGES

BY LINDSEY ANDERSON
SGN STAFF WRITER



NIANKHKHNUM AND KHNUMHOTEP EMBRACE IN A SCENE IN
A SMALL OFFERING ROOM IN THEIR JOINT TOMB

WALT WHITMAN AND PETER DOYLE, CIRCA 1869

Though you may not have learned about Queer love through the ages in history class, it has always been around. From secret lovers of the 1920s to those free to love openly in antiquity, LGBTQ+ relationships, like life, always find a way.

Knumpotep and Niankhhnum, ancient Egyptian lovers

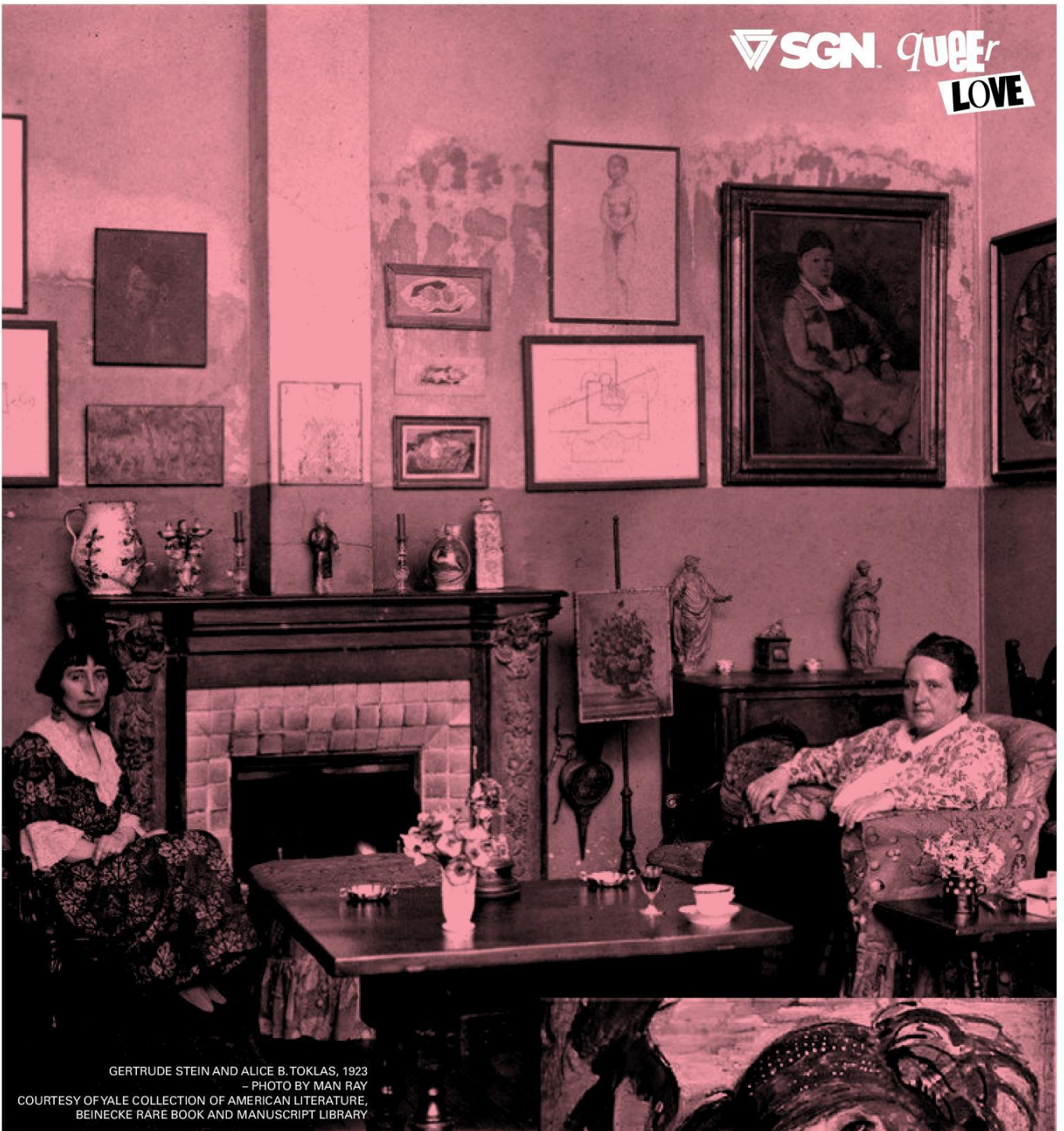
In ancient Egypt, married couples were often buried together to show that their love would remain intertwined forevermore. When the tomb of Knumpotep and Niankhhnum was discovered by archaeologists in 1964, they found these humble servants to the pharaoh intertwined in each other's arms, nose to nose. Historians first speculated that the two, despite their marital burial status, were brothers. Artwork on the tomb shows Knumpotep in the position often reserved for wives, and modern scholars assume the two were lovers.

Walt Whitman and Peter Doyle find love late in life

In 1865, Walt Whitman was at the height of his career, an American poet laureate, and a renowned writer. Despite his success, he was very lonely in his personal life — until he met a young streetcar driver named Peter Doyle. The two were soon inseparable.

Some historians would call them “good friends,” but as more have come to acknowledge Whitman as Queer, the story has shifted to recognize them as lovers. Whitman would disguise Doyle's initials in his work with the number “16.4,” representing the sixteenth and fourth letters of the alphabet, P and D.

Whitman and Doyle remained dutiful companions for the rest of Whitman's life, though the poet did become a recluse toward the end. They exchanged letters throughout Whitman's mental health decline, and friends of the poet acknowledged Doyle as Whitman's greatest love and the inspiration behind some of his final works.



GERTRUDE STEIN AND ALICE B. TOKLAS, 1923

— PHOTO BY MAN RAY

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**Gertrude Stein and Alice B. Toklas:
A quiet life together**

Gertrude Stein was a pioneering writer in feminist literature — and an openly Queer woman at a time when public displays of same-sex affection could be a crime in the United States. In 1903, Stein moved to France, where she met and fell in love with Alice B. Toklas, a promising concert pianist. The two remained devoted lovers for the next 40 years, often accompanying each other on long walks. On a stroll in Normandy in 1908, Stein got down on one knee and proposed to Toklas, even though the marriage of two women was not legal in France or the United States.

They lived a quiet life together in the Parisian countryside with their dogs, until the Nazi occupation of France. Following Stein's and Toklas's deaths, historians discovered drawers full of letters between the two, cementing their love for eternity with some of the most romantic words between lovers. In one, Stein wrote, "Because I didn't say good night and I miss it so, please know now how much I love you."

**Gerda Gottlieb and Lili Elbe:
A love beyond gender**

At the turn of the 20th century, Gerda Gottlieb met Lili Elbe at the Danish Academy of

Fine Arts. Though when they met Lili was still identifying as a man, she had been struggling for years with gender dysphoria.

They married in 1904. Both were artists and complemented each other with their different styles. Lili focused on the big picture, creating breathtaking landscapes, while Gerda paid attention to detail, crafting masterful portraits.

After a model failed to show up and sit for one of Gerda's portraits, she asked Lili to dress in women's clothing and model for her. After transforming into Gerda's model, Lili shined. It became clear that Lili felt like herself for the first time. After decades of living as a woman in private, Lili finally sought out gender-confirmation surgery.

She traveled to Germany and spent two years undergoing various surgeries until her transformation was complete. Throughout the process, Gerda remained by her side.

Lili was the first person to receive gender-confirmation surgery and became a star following her coming out. Unfortunately, due to the lack of proper antibiotics, she passed away in 1931 due to infections from her surgeries. Following that, Gerda continued to keep her legacy and memory alive.



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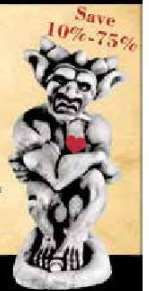
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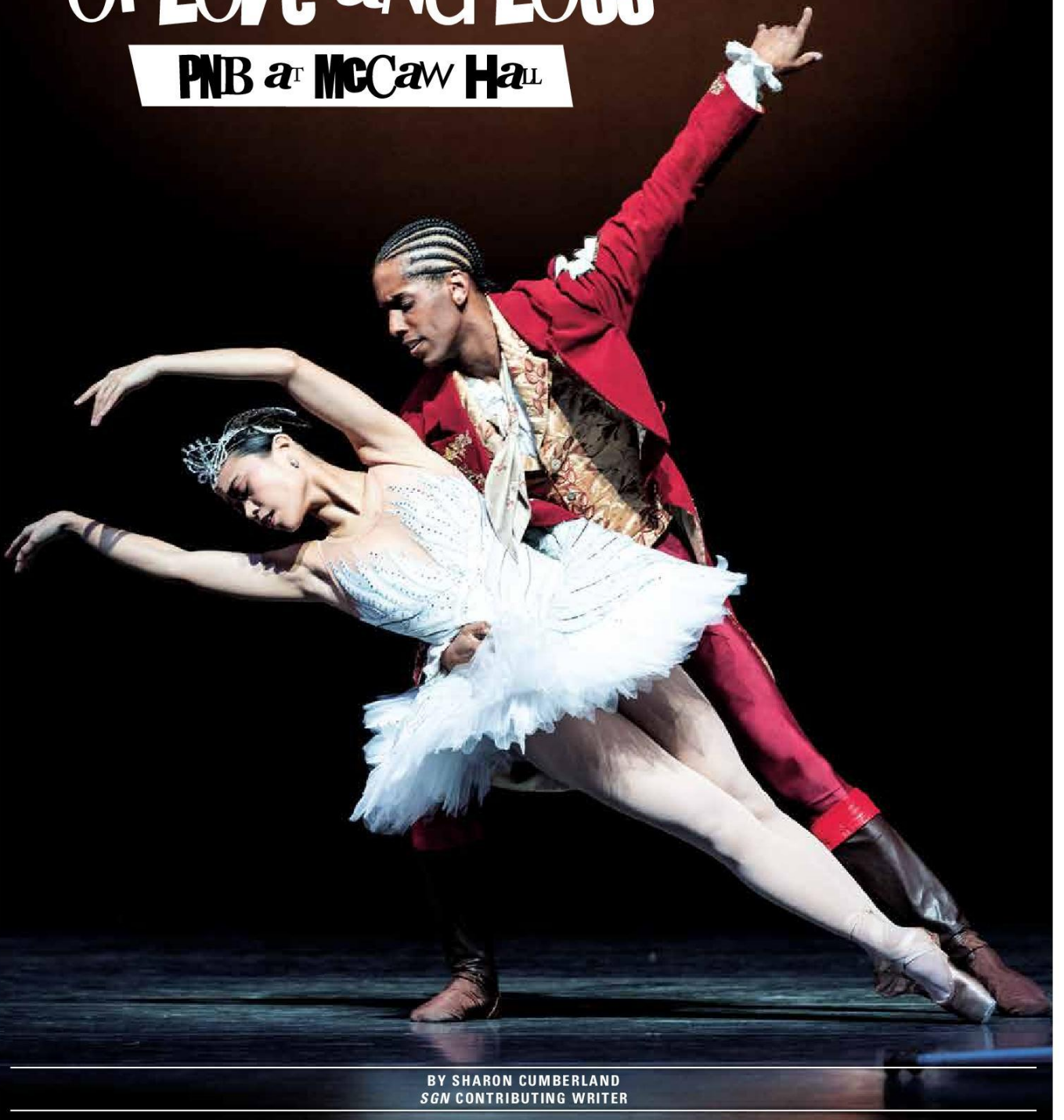
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KENT STOWELL'S *Swan Lake* a dreamy tale Of LOVE and LOSS

PNB at McCaw Hall



BY SHARON CUMBERLAND
SGN CONTRIBUTING WRITER

PACIFIC NORTHWEST BALLET PRINCIPAL DANCERS ANGELICA GENEROSA AND JONATHAN BATISTA IN KENT STOWELL'S SWAN LAKE - PHOTO BY ANGELA STERLING



(LR) PACIFIC NORTHWEST BALLET COMPANY DANCERS MALENA ANI, YUKI TAKAHASHI, MADISON RAYN ABEO, AND CLARA RUF MALDONADO IN KENT STOWELL'S *SWAN LAKE* — PHOTO BY ANGELA STERLING

Pacific Northwest Ballet
Kent Stowell's *Swan Lake*
Music by Peter Ilyich Tchaikovsky
McCaw Hall
February 3, 2024

The last time Pacific Northwest Ballet staged *Swan Lake* was two years ago — of course, there *was* a pandemic... But now that the danger has abated, we're delighted by its return, so we can return to McCaw Hall to see this great dream of dance, story, and music.

The opening night on February 3 was as beautiful and exciting as ever, with many new dancers joining our company favorites. The house was packed with an excited and appreciative audience.

Composer Peter Ilyich Tchaikovsky's music is familiar to most of us as orchestral pieces, but until you see the ballet it was written for, you haven't experienced the total magic of the maestro's work. Choreographer Kent Stowell built dances on the original foundation of the first choreographer, Maurice Petipa, who commissioned Tchaikovsky's dance music down to the last measure in service of the story he envisioned.

Set in an imaginary kingdom — brilliantly evoked by Paul Tazewell's fabulous costumes and Ming Cho Lee's cleverly classical sets — *Swan Lake* is the tale of an evil sorcerer who turns a princess and her ladies into swans condemned to wander until they are released by true love. The story includes an army of courtiers, brides, swans, and supporting players, including a jester (Kuu Sakuragi), whose twinkling, airborne dances are delightful.

In Act 1 of this tale of love and loss, we see the handsome Prince Siegfried (Jonathan Batista) at his coming-of-age birthday party. The elegant Queen Mother (Lily Wills) insists that he choose a wife from among the princesses she has invited, but Siegfried just wants to do is go hunting with his courtier buddies.

While doing that, he sees a flock of swans land on a lake and turn into beautiful women, led by Princess Odette (Angelica Generosa). Since this is a fairy tale, he falls instantly in love with her and proposes, but he is warned away by a wicked sorcerer (Otto Neubert). In the next three acts, the prince and the swans search for each other, are thwarted by an imitation princess (Generosa as the black swan, Odile), and are ultimately parted as



PACIFIC NORTHWEST BALLET PRINCIPAL DANCERS ANGELICA GENEROSA AND JONATHAN BATISTA IN KENT STOWELL'S *SWAN LAKE* — PHOTO BY ANGELA STERLING

the flock is compelled to fly away, leaving Siegfried heartbroken. Woven through this tragic fantasy are dance after dance of dramatic and beautiful expressions of love, optimism, and despair.

The most famous moments come at the entrance of 24 swans hopping and fluttering in sinuous curves, wearing white costumes that cleverly express the presence of wings. Later, in the dance of the cygnets, four young women face the audience, holding hands lattice-style, and execute two minutes of the most precise dancing imaginable, including 16 consecutive pas de chats, crossing ankles while airborne as they move sideways across the stage.

Madison Rayn Abeo, Malena Ani, Clara Ruf Maldonado, and Yuki Takahashi did a wonderful job in this iconic piece, which often heralds the emergence

of future stars. Case in point: in the 2015 PNB production, one of the little cygnets was Angelica Generosa, who danced this evening's star turn as Odette/Odile. Likewise, this current revival of *Swan Lake* is a showcase for a new generation of PNB dancers.

Going to the Pacific Northwest Ballet in Seattle is a lot more casual and fun than in other cities with major dance companies. The audiences are dressed both up and down — from flowing gowns to tattered jeans — and they come in all ages, from toddlers with booster seats to elders with walking sticks. The lobby and promenades of McCaw Hall are full of attendees who represent a wide range of races and nationalities, and PNB's company of dancers have come to reflect that variety themselves. On opening night, the audience saw

much more variation: curvy figures; flowing, braided, and knotted hair; tall dancers; short dancers; and a broad range of ages and origins.

How refreshing to see dancers who look more like us, no matter what we look like. We can imagine ourselves transported into that magical world more easily.

I also appreciated Stowell's choreography for very young dancers — pages following the Queen, an Indian princess with four smiling attendants, a ceremonial poesy of little girls in flowing white dresses.

Don't miss this wonderful ballet at McCaw Hall through February 11, 2024. Tickets are at <https://www.pnb.org>.

RUBYFRUIT
JUNGLE

A COMING OF AGE (EMPHASIS ON COMING)

*It's a vagina. This is a vagina reference.

BY CLAR HART
SGN CONTRIBUTING WRITER

RITA MAE BROWN, 1970 - BY DIANA DAVIES COURTESY OF NYPL

RUBYFRUIT JUNGLE
Rita Mae Brown
© 2015 Bantam Books
© 1973 Rita Mae Brown
\$18.00
240 pages

Content warning: Pedophilia, incest, sexual assault, homophobia, racism

Some books are masters of a shocking twist. You turn the page and your jaw drops as you're absolutely floored by a plot turn out of nowhere.

That moment came when I finished the last sentence of *Rubyfruit Jungle*, turned the page, and found out that *this* Rita Mae Brown — the author of the salacious, boundary-pushing, semi-autobiographical Lesbian drama — was also *that* Rita Mae Brown, author of Mrs. Murphy's cozy murder mysteries, whose titles feature cat puns like *Murder She Meowed*. Her cat, Sneaky Pie Brown, is her co-author, and he signs off his prologue with a paw print.

Truly, as that one Gay poet said, we contain multitudes.

Rubyfruit Jungle came to my attention after watching *The Incredibly True Adventure of Two Girls in Love*. The love interest's homophobic friends read it aloud while cruising in their convertible, and it convinces them to not hate the Gays. A Gay evangelism book whose title is a vagina euphemism? Such a book deserved investigation.

After reading it, I can confirm that this is absolutely not the book to give to anyone who hates Gays — and probably not to most people who like Gays, either. It follows the 1970s instant-bestseller pattern. That is, take a protagonist with a marginalized identity, mix in sex and violence, sprinkle liberally with incest, and laugh all the way to the bank.

Rubyfruit Jungle closely parallels the author's early life. Molly, the stand-in protagonist, like Brown herself, was born poor and adopted. Her mother often screams at her and disparages her bastard identity. Molly sleeps with her cousin but otherwise attempts to eschew redneck stereotypes. She's brilliant, funny, and charismatic, and becomes the class president before getting a full-ride scholarship to University of Florida.

The story then closely follows many a Lesbian pulp. She sleeps with her roommate, gets institutionalized, is thrown out

of her sorority, and hightails it to New York, where she hopes to find her future in Greenwich Village.

This period is sprinkled liberally with her conquests. An older actress tries to turn her into a kept woman, which she refuses. She falls in lust with a married professor, Polina, and Molly forces their first sexual encounter using the "Baby, It's Cold Outside" defense that women aren't allowed to say yes, and therefore shouldn't be listened to when they say no. In a bid to get closer to this professor, she also sleeps with both Polina's gingivitis-afflicted affair partner and her 16-year-old daughter. Yeah. Not exactly a fun summer convertible read.

In addition to being a monster, Molly has an interesting relationship to labels. In the introduction, Brown goes on a long rant about how they are useless. However, Molly, whenever she's asked, proudly declares herself a Lesbian and is hurt by a woman who refuses to admit she is too. When Molly is told she is Queer, however, she bemoans that everyone has to be stuck in a box. This wrestling is an understandable reaction to the way labels have been used against her. From when she was little, she understood she was a bastard and that it was a terrible thing to be. When she grows older, she views herself as a redneck and is determined to "overcome" it by learning to speak and dress as she sees wealthier students do.

Even when she is confident that she is Gay, which she knows from a young age, she passes as straight and does not disclose that she is a Lesbian unless she's asked (typically by a straight woman she's about to sleep with, at which point she declares it loudly and self-congratulatorily). After all, to come out at all during this period is incredibly brave, and she pays for it: she loses her scholarship, loses friends, and is shunned by her family.

At the same time, her privilege of being beautiful, femme, and straight-passing work in her favor, and she chooses not to interrogate these advantages. She is, instead, defensive of them to the extent that she will critique others who don't respect the systems she's benefited from. For example, she despises butches. It's beyond her why someone who would choose to question sexual norms would also choose to question gender norms.

So that's *Rubyfruit Jungle*. Of Brown's works, I can't say it's the one I recommend most. But *The Purrfect Murder*? Sign me up.

THE LANDMARK BESTSELLER BY

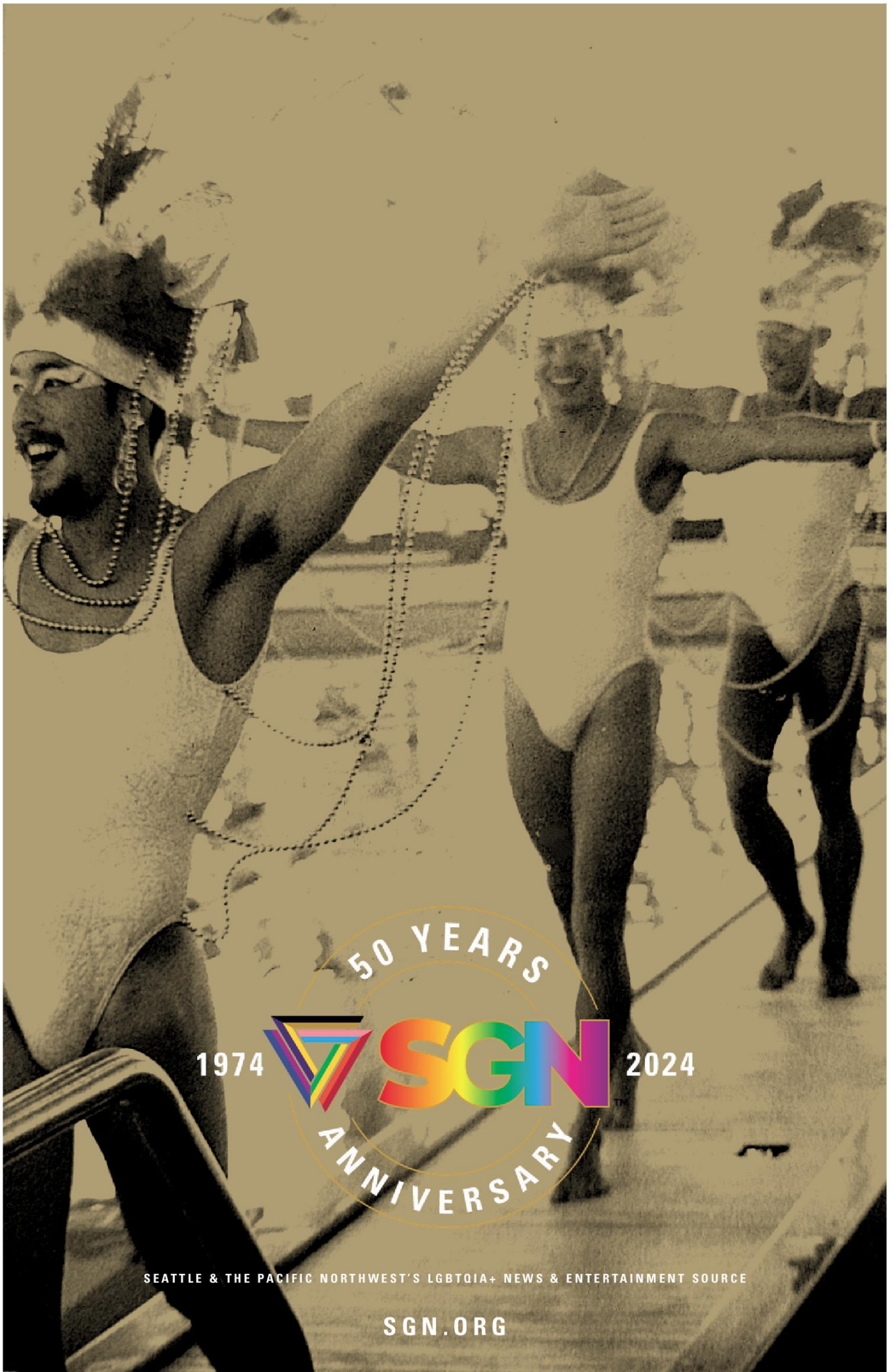
RITA MAE BROWN



RUBYFRUIT
JUNGLE

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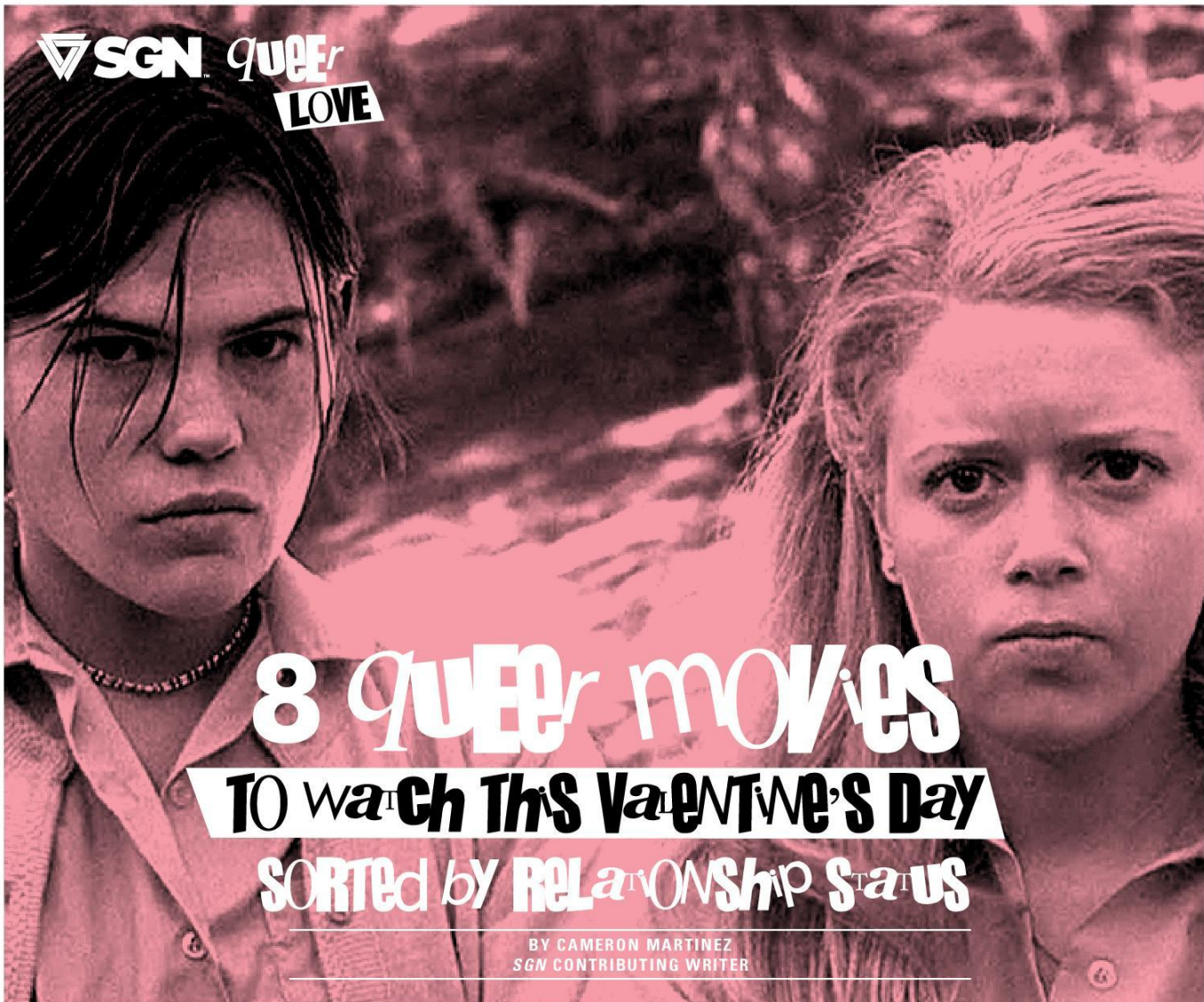
50 YEARS

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8 QUEER MOVIES TO WATCH THIS VALENTINE'S DAY

SORTED BY RELATIONSHIP STATUS

BY CAMERON MARTINEZ
SGN CONTRIBUTING WRITER



BOOKSMART - PHOTO COURTESY OF ANNAPURNA PICTURES



BUT I'M A CHEERLEADER - PHOTO COURTESY OF LIONSGATE

Well, folks, it's finally February, which means it's time to get in the Valentine's Day spirit. Whether that means giving into capitalism, crying, stuffing your face with candy, or something else, I have the perfect thing to get you in the spirit, depending on your current relationship status: movies!

While none of these films take place on Valentine's Day, they all share the common theme of Queer love. So let's take a trip on the love train to see which movie may or may not match up with your current situation.

Single and discovering your Queer identity

For those who are single and just discovering your Queer identity, I recommend watching the 1999 rom-com *But I'm a Cheerleader*.

The film follows high school cheerleader Megan (Natasha Lyonne), as she is sent off to a conversion camp by her parents to cure her lesbianism. The thing is, Megan

thought she was straight — until her family and friends brought up her fascination with the female body and love for tofu.

While the film takes place in a conversion camp, it examines homophobia in a satirical light, and the characters ultimately find acceptance for themselves. This movie taught me a lot about accepting my Queer identity, and hopefully it will for you too!

Just loving your friends

The love between friends is just as important as that between romantic partners, and it's time for us to recognize that. So, for those who are content with loving friendships, I recommend watching the 2019 comedy/thriller *Booksmart*.

The movie follows high school seniors Amy and Molly (Kaitlyn Deaver and Beanie Feldstein), as they attempt to go to a party just one time before they graduate. What follows is a series of hilarious interactions with their classmates, teachers, and parents.



In love for the first time

Love is intense. Especially when it's happening for the very first time. For those who are in that situation (or are super into Timothée Chalamet), I recommend watching the 2017 romance/drama *Call Me by Your Name*.

In it, 17-year-old Elio (Chalamet), who is spending his summer with his parents in a gorgeous rural northern Italian home, falls for a 24-year-old graduate student named Oliver (Armie Hammer). The film focuses on all the intense emotions and

awkward moments that come from experiencing romantic love for the first time. It's a beautiful portrayal of something most of us go through at some point in our lives.

In an online relationship or met online

Are you currently in an online relationship? Or did you meet your partner online? If you answered yes to either or both questions, you should watch the 2018 rom-com *Love, Simon*.

The film follows closeted Gay high schooler Simon (Nick Robinson) as he sends anonymous emails to another unknown Gay boy in his high school. (In the age of online romance, this is the standard for some.)

Very taken

For those who are madly in love with their partners, I recommend the 2016 romantic thriller *The Handmaiden*.

The film follows the love between Japanese heiress Lady Hideko (Kim Min-hee) and her Korean maid, Sook-hee (Kim Tae-ri), in Japanese-occupied Korea. It has everything you could possibly want from a thriller: con men, double-crossings, and enough twists and turns to make you feel spun up by the end of it all.

Point is, if you're willing to do some crazy double-crossing to be with your partner, this film is definitely for you.

Learning to love yourself

In order to love others, you must first learn to love yourself. If you're currently in the process of gaining self-love, I recommend the 2011 coming-of-age drama *Tomboy*.

The film follows 10-year-old Laure (Zoé Héran), who experiments with presenting as a boy when their family moves to a new town. The bravery Laure shows is something to admire and aspire to, even at an older age.

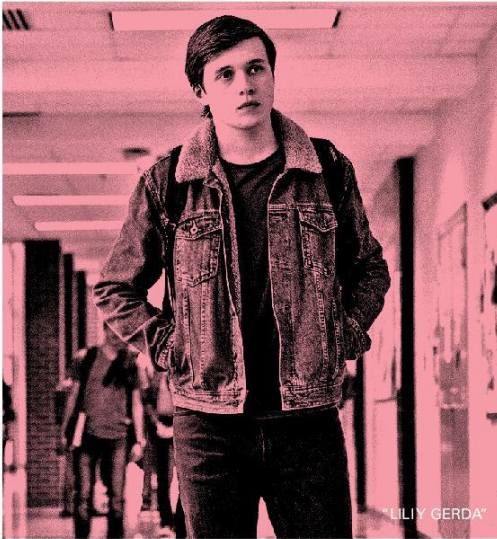
Just looking for some action

No shame here. Sometimes all you need is a little physical attention, and that's totally fine. For those who are just looking for some action this Valentine's Day, I recommend the 2023 comedy *Bottoms*.

The film follows best friends PJ and Josie (Rachel Sennott and Ayo Edebiri), who are ready for their first times. They choose to achieve this goal by creating an all-female fight club (chaperoned by Marshawn Lynch) to secretly get their crushes to have sex with them.

It's a hilarious film that shows you exactly how you *shouldn't* be trying to have sex with people.

Hope you enjoy the movie(s)! Happy Valentine's Day!

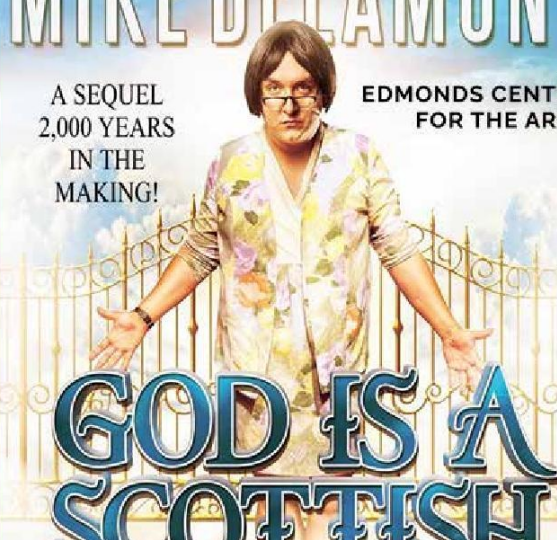


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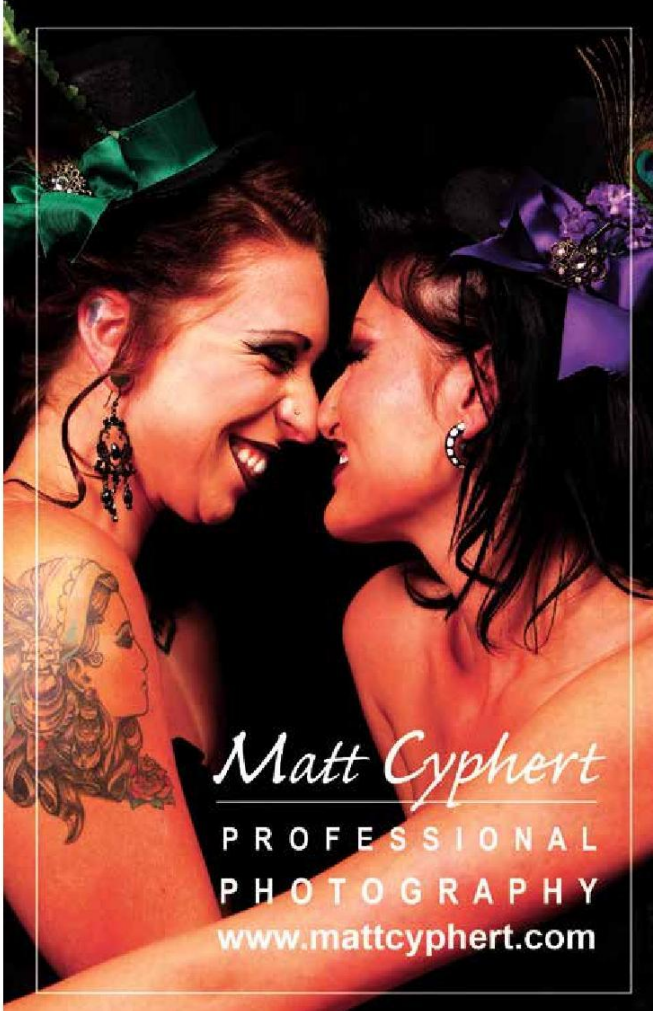
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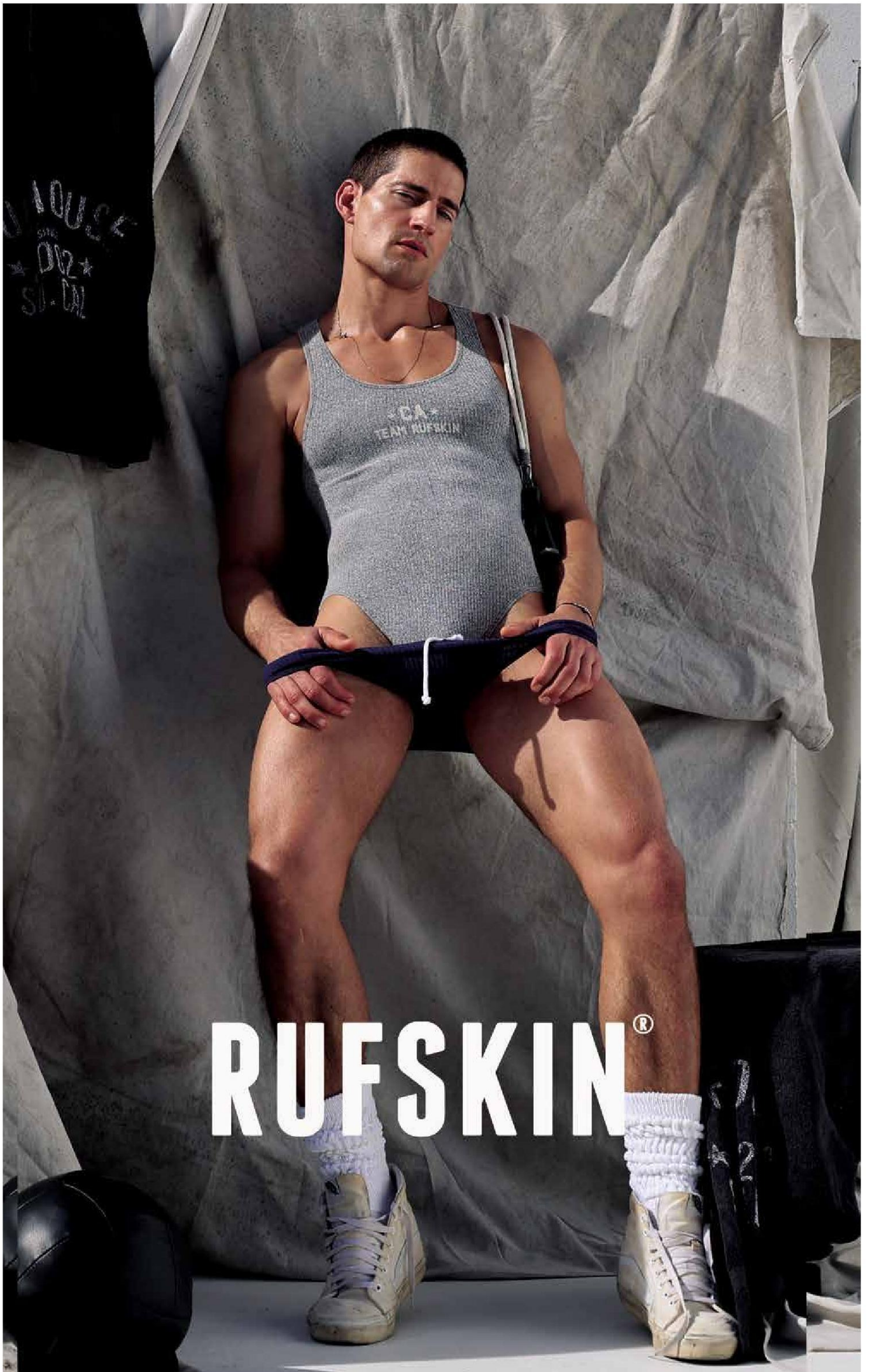
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