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# Are gay bars and nightclubs back in style?



Kamala Harris leading in North Carolina polls

-pg 8

Comedian and actor Eddie Izzard comes to Charlotte

-pg 15





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The focus of QNotes is to serve the LGBTQ and straight ally communities of the Charlotte region, North Carolina and beyond, by featuring arts, entertainment, news and views content in print and online that directly enlightens, informs and engages the readers about LGBTQ life and social justice issues.

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## Remembering Scorpio

Originally opened in 1968, the legendary Club spent most of its life on Freedom Drive in Charlotte, North Carolina. That building has been demolished but the club has re-opened in a new location in the city's South End neighborhood. Old Scorpio is gone forever, but you can still visit.

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## More trouble for Robinson

His vitriol has made his supporters rally around him and his opposition grow even larger. Self loathing, white nationalist supporting, anti-LGBTQ+ and an angry faux Christian. From adult bookstore adventures to calls for slavery on porn sites, the polls say he's tanking in the governor's race.



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# Michele Morrow says plus symbol in LGBTQ+ stands for pedophilia

Candidate for state superintendent has history of demonizing LGBTQ+ students and educators



by Taylor Heeden Larkins  
Qnotes Staff Writer

On Sept. 16, candidate for school superintendent Michelle Morrow crossed a line both sides of the aisle have said goes too far: She publicly implied LGBTQ+ folks are pedophiles, and stated her opponent Mo Green won't keep students safe because of his support for the community. To be specific, here's exactly what she said:

*"As Superintendent, I will work with the GA to enforce mandatory background checks for ALL public school staff and IMMEDIATELY suspend the license of any staff member arrested for crimes against children. Mo Green has stated that the Parental Bill of Rights 'Does more harm than good' and he states he is 'proudly endorsed' by Equality NC, whose mission statement is to promote LGBTQ+ power. Newsflash...the '+' includes PEDOPH\*L\*A!! Mo Green will NOT keep our children safe!"*

It's officially less than 50 days before the November general election, and it's no surprise campaigns are switching into high gear to convince voters they're the right choice. Some are using hateful rhetoric and name-calling as a strategy in attempt to pave a way to victory by creating division and instilling fear.

Morrow is one of those candidates. As the Republican nominee for North Carolina Superintendent of Public Schools, she's no stranger to name-calling or blame game strategies. In fact, her entire campaign is based on ostracizing LGBTQ+ North Carolinians and advocating for anti-queer policies like the Parents' Bill of Rights and the health care ban for trans and gender-nonconforming youth.

Morrow's X post, calling the comments about the LGBTQ+ community and Equality NC "wrong," "hateful" and "bullying vulnerable students, staff and families across North Carolina."

"This is another example in Michele Morrow's long history of spreading hatred," he wrote, "encouraging violence, and proving she's unfit to lead our public schools. She's the wrong role model for North Carolina's 1.3 million students in public schools.

"Every child deserves to learn, and every staff member deserves to work, in an environment that is safe, welcoming and inclusive," he continued. "Politicians like Morrow use schools as battlegrounds for their culture wars and it's simply unacceptable. We have to be focused on the very real education challenges in front of us, such as getting a well-paid teacher in every classroom and addressing the shortage of mental health professionals who support the well-being of our students."

#### Who is Michele Morrow?

Morrow was born in upstate New York, where she spent most of her childhood until she moved to Charlotte as a sophomore in high school. She received her Bachelor's of Science in nursing from UNC-Chapel Hill and went on to work for hospitals and ICUs in Texas after marrying her husband, Stuart. They had five children, whom she home schooled and sent to private schools for most of their lives. Prior to her campaign for the office of State Superintendent, Morrow unsuccessfully ran for the Wake County Board of Education after becoming involved in the "parental rights" movement.

Now Morrow is seeking to oversee the state's entire public education system — a system she has called a hub for "indoctrination centers" and

"socialism centers." Her campaign website has a three pillar plan to address scholastics, safety and spending in schools, but each point in her plan demonizes public education. Under the first section labeled "scholastics," Morrow targets curriculum regarding racially-aware and queer history, using buzz phrases including "teaching children racially divisive and sexually explicit content."

She also has come under fire for openly calling for a televised execution of former President Barack Obama and current President Joe Biden.

"I prefer a Pay Per View of him in

← Post



MicheleMorrow  
@MicheleMorrowNC

We must keep EVERY student safe in ALL our schools!

As Superintendent, I will work with the GA to enforce mandatory background checks for ALL public school staff and IMMEDIATELY suspend the license of any staff member arrested for crimes against children

Mo Green has stated that the Parental Bill of Rights 'Does more harm than good' and he states he is 'proudly endorsed' by Equality NC, whose mission statement is to promote LGBTQ+ power

NEWSFLASH...the '+' includes PEDOPH\*L\*A!!

Mo Green will NOT keep our children safe!

Michelle Morrow's big lie on X.  
CREDIT: Screen Capture

front of the firing squad," she wrote in a tweet from May 2020, responding to someone who said they should send Obama to prison at Guantanamo Bay. "I do not want to waste another dime on supporting his life. We could make some money back from televising his death."

If she is elected and has her way, Morrow wants to eliminate the state's board of education, which is responsible for creating policies and procedures for public schools in the state. By getting rid of the board, the state's education agenda would be under the control of the superintendent and the state legislature, which currently is led by Republicans.

"I'd like to see a constitutional amendment to get rid of the state Board of Education," she said. "If the superintendent is elected and works under the legislature — knowing that they're accountable to the legislature to oversee the DPI and to oversee and have impact into the superintendents in the 115 districts, I think we would be so much better off because you don't have all these extra people right in [the] mix."

#### Fact Checking Fear Mongering

It's important to hold people running for public office accountable when they overstep the bounds of their jobs or the jobs they seek, and this case is no different. The "+" in LGBTQ+ doesn't stand for pedophilia, as Morrow claimed — it's meant to include those not represented by the acronym itself.

Pedophilia is defined by the American Psychological Association as a disorder "in which sexual acts or fantasies involving pre-pubertal children are

the persistently preferred or exclusive method of achieving sexual excitement."

The LGBTQ+ community has not advocated for pedophilia. Such claims are rooted in past anti-gay movements and tied to a history of longstanding false claims. Evangelical Christians in the 1970s used claims of higher rates of child sex crimes in gay communities to spread misinformation and instill fear among the community at large.

Raleigh-based television station WRAL found Morrow's claim was a "pants on fire" level of false, according to their official fact checking partner PolitiFact.

It reads as follows: "Morrow said the plus in LGBTQ+ includes pedophilia. That's ridiculous. The plus sign in the widely-used acronym 'LGBTQ+' recognizes sexual orientations and gender identities that are not represented by the other five letters. There is no evidence of a connection between gay, lesbian or bisexual people and child molestation. In fact, studies of child sexual abuse have shown that most child molesters identify as heterosexual."

Schools don't need protection from LGBTQ+ folks. Trans students or openly queer-identifying teachers are not a threat to North Carolina's children.

The real threat comes from Morrow and others like her who, instead of using their platforms to advocate for raises in teacher pay and better investments in public education, push false claims with the hopes of capitalizing off of the division it causes. ::



A Morrow supporter recently asked the candidate on the social media platform X for her thoughts on charter schools not having guidelines in response to a former teacher at a Burke County charter school who pleaded guilty to and was sentenced for child sex crimes.

As mentioned in her post previously, Morrow replied she would work with the North Carolina General Assembly to enforce background checks for every public school staff member and suspend the license of those arrested for crimes against children, before layered on the lies about Equality NC and the LGBTQ+ community.

Green's campaign responded to

# The Free (?) State of Florida

Op Ed



by Jesse Monteagudo  
Quotes Contributing Writer

Recently the Ron DeSantis Administration posted signs on interstate highways welcoming visitors to the “Free State of Florida.” The idea of Florida as a uniquely free state is a favorite of DeSantis, who has been using it for years. During his second inauguration in January 2023 the governor bragged about his state’s opposition to federal policies and his war against “woke” ideologies. “When the world lost its mind - when common sense suddenly became an uncommon virtue - Florida was a refuge of sanity, a citadel of freedom for our fellow Americans and even for people around the world,” he said.

Like other conservative individuals or groups [Moms for Liberty] DeSantis’s use of words like “freedom” and “liberty” is ironic. If by “freedom” you mean the freedom for individuals to own and use guns; or for corporations to exploit their employees, consumers or the environment; then Florida is a “Free State.” If you mean freedom to express your gender identity;

control your reproductive functions; read controversial books; promote Diversity, Equity and Inclusion (DEI); discuss climate change; or (if you are a teacher or public official) dare to criticize DeSantis or his policies, then Florida is far from free. Florida also has one of the highest percentages of citizens who are not free, because they are behind bars.

This November, Florida voters will have the right to approve two progressive amendments. Amendment Three would legalize the recreational use of marijuana and Amendment Four would expand abortion access beyond the current six-week limit. Both Amendments are quite popular and have a good chance to get the 60% super majority required to pass. This does not agree with DeSantis’s idea of “freedom.” Ever since both amendments were placed on the November ballot, the governor has done all he could to make sure both measures are voted down. More recently DeSantis used his Department of Election Crimes and Security – created in 2022 as a tool in the governor’s arsenal against democracy – to harass Floridians who dared to sign a petition in favor of Amendment Four.



CREDIT: Facebook

Signing a petition is part of an American’s freedom of speech, but apparently it is not one valued by the “Free State of Florida.” Since then, the Florida Supreme Court agreed to fast-track a case to determine if DeSantis and his stooges improperly used their power to interfere against Amendment Four. Don’t hold your breath.

Throughout its history, Florida had to be pushed forward, kicking and

screaming, to accept the progress of American freedoms: the abolition of slavery, voting rights for women and so on. It should be no surprise that under the autocratic rule of Ron DeSantis – Donald Trump with brains, which only makes him more dangerous – freedom is just a word used by the governor to justify whatever he wants. Once again, we Floridians are the ones who will pay the price. ::

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# Long March for Unity and Justice takes place across NC

Event helmed by Greensboro's Beloved Community Center

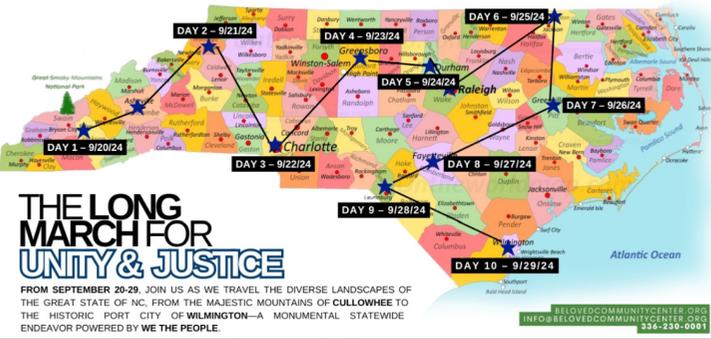


by Jonathan Golian  
Qnotes Staff Writer

In an epic pledge to residents of North Carolina, the Beloved Community Center of Greensboro (BCC) embarked on a statewide tour (across 10 dates and locations) dubbed "The Long March for Unity & Justice."

Ahead of the election this Fall, BCC has put together a tour that will go city-to-city throughout NC, starting Sept. 20 in both Cullowhee and Asheville. Among the objectives The Long March For Unity & Justice has planned will be conducting grassroots education of the issues surrounding each territory, working with each community on voting initiatives as well as helping residents find out how to get registered, and speak on the issues our country will be facing at the ballot box, locally as well as nationally.

The aims of the movement's mission spans a multitude of concerns plaguing citizens around America in 2024, including but not limited to, as



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This map of North Carolina shows the stops along the way for the Long March for Unity and Justice.  
CREDIT: Beloved Community Center

listed by the BCC mission page, "gender and LGBTQ equality, environmental justice, women's rights, reproductive justice, youth and students' rights, racial and social justice, faith and religious inclusivity, worker and labor rights, immigrant justice and disability justice."

BCC has had a long history of civil actions throughout North Carolina, with their first being the nation's first Truth and Reconciliation Process, a commission-based act that aims to heal a community through investigating abuses within select areas while giving victims a chance to tell their stories without cross-examination utilized around the world, back in 1979 in the case of the Greensboro Massacre, which led to an apology from the Greensboro City Council in 2020.

The Long March For Unity & Justice is an extension and continuation of this process, led by Co-Executive Directors of BCC, Joyce Hobson Johnson and Rev. Nelson Johnson, acting on a state-level with the aim to heal divisions, address community issues, build grassroots leadership, affirm truth and push to transform oppressive policies and systems.

Included in the movement from the Charlotte community are leaders from The Freedom Center For Social Justice, Executive Director Bishop Tonia Rawls and Deputy Director Cameron Pruette. Both will be marching alongside fellow

community activists Jermaine Nakia Lee, Gracelyn Avion, Nichel Dunlap-Thompson, and the collective will also be joined by the Rhythm of Psalm Drumline.

Multiple groups in and outside of Charlotte will have been involved in helping get the Long March underway around North Carolina, including the NC Black Alliance, NC Council of Churches, Black Workers for Justice, Blueprint NC, Forward Justice, Down Home NC, Freedom Center, Red, Wine & Blue, Poor People's Campaign, Second Chance Alliance, Union of Southern Service Workers, People's Power Coalition, Justice Served NC, Southern Vision Alliance and NC BLOC.

Each date on the tour has featured a march to occur mid-morning or early afternoon, which included rally happening following shortly afterward. The locations across the state listed for the Long March tour include Cullowhee and Asheville, Charlotte, Greensboro, Durham, Raleigh, Halifax and Northampton Counties, Greenville, Fayetteville, Laurinburg and Wilmington (Sept. 29, last day of the march).

The Long March For Unity & Justice made its stop in Charlotte on Sept. 22 at 4 p.m., with a march that began at 1600 West Trade Street and ended the day with a rally at 6 p.m. at 1729 Griers Grove Road. ::

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# Charlotte Trans Health ready for celebration with 'T.H.E. Night'

The Charlotte Transgender Healthcare Group (CTHG), or Charlotte Trans Health for short, will bring together many of Charlotte's local healthcare providers and community activists for a night of dancing, drag performances and hors d'oeuvres for this year's annual Trans Health is for Everyone (T.H.E.) fundraiser. The event takes place Saturday, Oct. 19.

Charlotte Trans Health, which boasts specialists in the field from local surrounding counties, was formed in January 2012 by Dr. Lisa Griffin, who realized the need for a varied community that would be able to provide care for gender diverse individuals. Starting out with a core team of seven mental health providers, five hormone prescribing professionals and one

surgeon (all were original founders), CTHG is intent on having access for Charlotte and the surrounding communities to discuss best practices in transgender healthcare, cover complex cases and distribute new information as it becomes available.

This year's featured theme for 2024 is "T.H.E. Night Hits the Runway." The event will include many of the Queen City's local healthcare providers, who will be showcased alongside several local drag celebrities. The presentation is designed to convey the message of "compassion meets collaboration," resulting in efficient gender-affirming care accessible to everyone.

Stepping into their own pairs of dancing shoes, each provider will be a drag child to one of the event's selected trans or

non-binary drag parents. One of the highlight elements to the night will be allowing each provider the experience of expressing themselves through the art of drag and learn from their co-stars' lived experience as they busily prep their performances for the upcoming October stage and runway.

The announced teams will be Dorae Saunders and Carson Rounds, MD of Avance Care Midtown; Lilli Serena Frost and Rhett Brown, MD of Avance Care Midtown; Lolita Chanel and Benjamin "Frankie" Simmons, MD of Atrium Health; Nova Stella and Joe Pope, LCMHC of Joseph Pope Counseling; and Quinnty Fre\$h and Jennifer Ratajczak, LCMHC of Rooted Therapy.

Back again to host the night's festivities will be local comedian and "self-made man" Shaine Laine, along with DJ Vanna Vanity of the Vanity House.

Charlotte Trans Health's T.H.E. Night will take place at the Diamonds Direct



Luxury Lounge at Truist Field, beginning at 6 p.m. and continuing to 10 p.m. Tickets are available now at the event site, <https://charlottetranshealth.org/the-night/> ::

—Jonathan Golian

# Atmid scandal, Robinson stays in gubernatorial race

In a breaking story published on Thursday, Sept. 19, CNN Reporters Andrew Kaczynski and Em Stack found disparaging commentary made by North Carolina's Lt. Governor Mark Robinson over a decade ago – before embarking on any attempt at a political career – in an old message forum on the pornographic site, "Nude Africa."

While many of the findings in the comments were not released because of what was described as their "gratuitously sexual and lewd" nature, CNN and other networks did choose some of the posts to display. Among them, the account holder – presumably Robinson – referred to himself as a "black Nazi" and lauded Adolf Hitler's "Mein Kampf." He also announced, in opposition to then President Barack Obama, that he would "take Hitler over any sh\*t that's

in Washington right now." Perhaps one of the most disturbing posts were his sentiments about slavery: "Slavery is not bad. Some people need to be slaves. I wish they would bring it back. I would certainly buy a few."

All of the posts fell under the profile name "minisoldr," a moniker that had been linked to Robinson from the years he consistently used the name in profiles on social media, along with much of the personal information gathered by CNN that corresponds with Robinson, such as his name being listed on the account, and a mention made of his marriage date to Yolanda Hill in 2008, which (at that time) matched their 18 years of marriage since 1990.

In a follow-up piece done by Politico that same afternoon, Robinson was found to also be a part of Ashley

Madison, a website created for married partners seeking affairs, which accrued its own set of controversies in August 2015 when the names of its clientele were released to the public.

In response to the CNN report, Robinson spoke with Kaczynski around 4:05 pm Sept. 19.

"This is not us, these are not our words, this is not anything characteristic of me, nor has it ever been," Robinson asserted. "The People of North Carolina know that I have been completely transparent about my history. All the warts, we put them all out. The folks here also know my character, who I am, they know my voice, so to speak. This is not my voice, this is not things we would ever say, or even think."

In an additional response, to how Robinson can deny any of it wasn't him, Robinson placed the blame solely on "over one million dollars spent on [Robinson] utilizing AI (Artificial Intelligence) by a billionaire's son who is bound and determined to destroy" the candidate.

Robinson has seemingly dismissed the fact the sites and accounts are decades old



and AI technology did not exist when the comments are shown to have been made.

As of midnight on Thursday, despite reported rumblings from Republicans and Democrats in North Carolina, Robinson refused to withdraw as a candidate for governor.

During an interview with CNN in response to the reports on Robinson, Stein had this to say: "North Carolinians already know Mark Robinson is completely unfit to be Governor. [I'm remaining] focused on winning this campaign so that together we can build a safer, stronger North Carolina for everyone."

The Trump team has yet to comment on the ongoing stories regarding Robinson. ::

—Jonathan Golian

# NC Governor Cooper calls VP Harris 'next president'

North Carolina Governor Roy Cooper recently proclaimed presidential hopeful and Vice President Kamala Harris as "the next president of the United States." While there are multiple paths to victory for Harris, capturing North Carolina this November would likely ensure her the number of electoral college votes she needs.

While speaking to "Face the Nation," when asked whether or not the citizens of the swing state (which hasn't gone blue since 2008 for President Obama) might do so for Harris, Cooper replied: "There's no question about it."

"It's close here in North Carolina. It always is," Cooper continued. "This was Biden-Harris's closest loss in 2020, only 1.3 percent, so the fact that Kamala Harris, as Vice President of the United States, has been to North Carolina 17

times shows that she cares about our state. She knows that we are in play."

There have been close calls in the last twenty years when the state has come to making a choice for the highest office in the United States. The previous example mentioned, which pitted Obama in his first run against the late Sen. John McCain, was a toss-up which landed in Obama's favor by slivers of a point – 49.7 percent to 49.4 percent. In the 2020 election, Trump narrowly won North Carolina over President Biden by a 1.3 percent difference, resulting from less than 100,000 votes.

Following the recent debate between Harris and Trump, it appears Cooper might have the right call. After what could be seen as a crushing defeat by Harris over Trump, the polls reacted

quickly. According to the national Morning Consult poll the following day, Harris led by nearly four points. As of Sept. 17, she leads nationally by six points in the same survey. In North Carolina, she has substantially closed the gap between the two candidates to a near statistical tie. Trump is ahead of Harris now by only half a percentage point in the Tarheel State.

While a majority of Harris's support does come from Democrats, with independent voters, she leads with 46 points in opposition to his 40, as per the survey. However, as the Morning Consult gave the new ratings, it also provided a message of caution.

"It's too early to say whether Harris' debate performance is the key driver of our latest head-to-head numbers, as our short-term trends suggest she was already building momentum ahead of [the] televised match-up."

Harris continues to pound away at the state after the debate, touching down this past Sept. 12 for a campaign



Governor Cooper is confident VP Harris will swing NC blue. CREDIT: Facebookaskew.

event in Charlotte. Still carrying all of the triumphant airs from the previous debate, the stakes are no less clear to her in speaking to the metropolitan city.

"North Carolina has a history of the point I'm about to make," said Harris. "Generations of Americans before us led the fight for freedom. And now the baton is in our hands. It is in our hands. So we who believe in the sacred freedom to vote will finally pass the John Lewis Voting Rights Act. ... So much, so much is at stake in this election." ::

—Jonathan Golian

# Revisiting the history of Scorpio

Yesterday, today and how you can visit the legendary Freedom Drive location again



by David Aaron Moore  
Qnotes Staff Writer

Scorpio is all shiny and new and located in the popular South End District. There are many club-goers excited about the latest addition of the bar and dance club to the landscape of what South End has to offer. But there are others who see the almost forced eviction of the business from its previous Freedom Drive location on Charlotte's west side as the passing of an era.

In recent months, conversation was circulating among local history buffs and community leaders that the actual Scorpio structure was under consideration for historic designation by the local chapter of the Historic Landmarks Commission. That was confirmed by **QNotes**. Before historic consideration ever reached designation, the decision was made to raze the building.

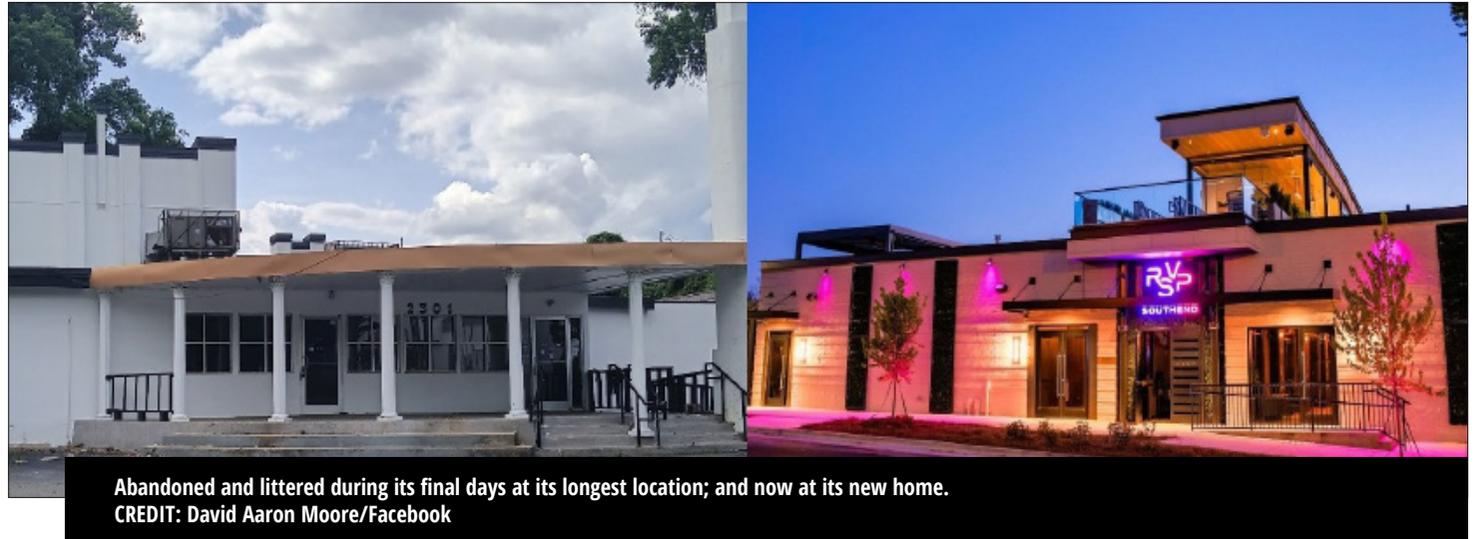
Although it certainly wasn't an architectural beauty outside, it made up for that inside. And it had staying power, as well as history. While you'll never actually step foot inside again, what if we told you that exploring the interior was still an option? *Would you want to go?*

Ponder that thought for a moment, and let's take a look at some other facts about old Scorpio and new Scorpio.

New Scorpio is a bit more pricey, from parking and door fees to what it takes to cover the cost of your favorite beverage, but owners are adamant everyone is still as welcome to attend as they've always been. Considering the change of location and the higher property values in South End, it only makes sense the cost of everything else would go up, too.

The Scorpio Lounge opened in 1968, on South Boulevard, before settling into the 2301 Freedom Drive location in 1974.

The dance club called the space home for nearly 50 years. It was popular with all of the LGBTQ+ community, though at that time individuals typically identified as gay men, lesbians, bisexuals, drag queens (who were usually gay men), female impersonators (who were usually gay men), transsexuals or the awkward sounding "sex-change." The word



Abandoned and littered during its final days at its longest location; and now at its new home.  
CREDIT: David Aaron Moore/Facebook

transgender hadn't quite made it into the vernacular of the time just yet.

Old Scorpio was also a place to socialize with other like-minded individuals, make new friends, find a romance, pick up a fling for a one-time affair or just dance the night away to the latest disco hits of the time. If you identified as a female impersonator or a drag queen, chances are, you probably took a turn in one of the popular stage shows a few times, or several. That all depended on your talent and how much of a following you developed.

Multiple generations of individuals came of age at Scorpio and history was made there, in so many ways. Foremost were the unrecorded things: the lifetime friendships and the romantic relationships and chance encounters that were born in the space. It was a safe place during an era where the LGBTQ+ community needed a haven and a place to relax, long enough to let their guard down and feel comfortable.

Then there were the significant moments in Charlotte's political history. Former Mayor Harvey Gantt made an appearance at the club during his first run for office in 1982. In an effort to show the local LGBTQ+ community he cared about the things that mattered to them, Gantt met and talked to club patrons at length and even took a few spins on the dance floor at night's end with popular drag diva of the day, Toni Lenoir.

Important moments in queer culture history took place when some of the city's earliest drag performers – names like Boom Boom Latour, Toni Lenoir, Tina Terrell, Kasey King, Gran Prix, Ebony Devone, Jamie Monroe and so many others – would come together and perform in fundraisers for members of the community who battled a once-deadly plague called AIDS. Even some of the very performers who worked to help those in need in the earlier days would eventually fall victim to the disease, which robbed our community of so many and so much.

Even though that history must always be respected and cherished, it is part of the past. It's gone. But you can virtually visit the club again. From side to side, front to back and top to bottom.

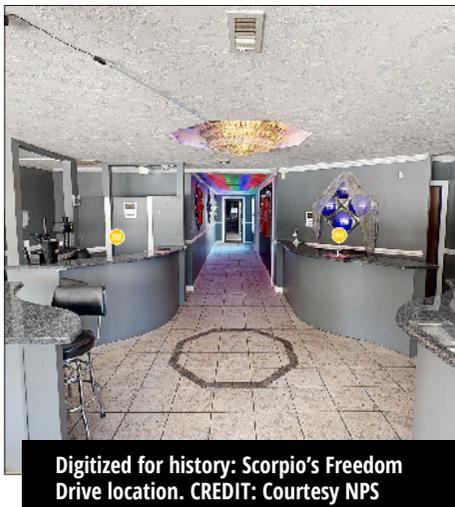
Call it intuition from the National

Center for Preservation Technology and Training (NCPTT) if you like, but a thumbs up for a request to visually and dimensionally document Scorpio (and White Rabbit Books, along with the **QNotes** office) was given a green light. It was done in a manner that allows you to visit from the front door and explore the entire interior. Part of the National Parks Service office located in Natchitoches, Louisiana, the accomplished effort to catalog the historic LGBTQ+ nightclub was managed by Catherine Cooper, PhD, a research scientist in the Technical Services Division of NCPTT. The results are amazing, and emotionally moving. To learn more about NCPTT, visit their website here: <https://www.nps.gov/subjects/ncptt/index.htm>

[subjects/ncptt/index.htm](https://www.nps.gov/subjects/ncptt/index.htm)

Ready to take a virtual trip back in time? We're going to post the link here. It's a bit long for the print version of **QNotes**, but you can always check out the story when it appears online, and just click and follow the link. <https://my.matterport.com/show/?m=XuvLc6SmUts>

Back to New Scorpio: their address is 225 Fairwood Avenue off South Boulevard and they're located in the RSVP Complex. You can visit their website at [www.thescorpio.com](http://www.thescorpio.com) or check out social media pages for info on events and hours of operation. It's nice, glossy and indeed a bit more pricey, but worth the effort for a new experience with an old friend, don't you think? ::



Digitized for history: Scorpio's Freedom Drive location. CREDIT: Courtesy NPS



# Are gay bars coming back in style?

Dating apps, cultural and political negativity and a pandemic set us on a trail to isolate. Are we ready to socialize again?



by David Aaron Moore  
Qnotes Staff Writer

Much has changed since the nightclub scene of the 20th century. With the embracing of queer culture and self-recognition of identities beyond just lesbian, gay, bisexual and transgender, a whole new world has opened up. It's impossible not to recognize the advent of the internet; hook-up, dating and social apps; and the legalization of same-sex marriage. By 2015, our culture had dramatically changed.

It became okay to be gay in a straight space. Lots of younger individuals in the LGBTQ+ community preferred being in environments that were welcoming to a diverse crowd with a blend of genders, orientations and more

Then came 2016 and the Trump era.

That changed the socio-political environment. Much that we had accomplished felt as though it was being lost and undone. Hostility towards the LGBTQ+ community became more commonplace again. And the pandemic forced us to ostracize ourselves from socializing in crowded settings.

Statistics begin to show that gay clubs were on a down slope and closing around the country in droves. Bars and clubs catering to specific lesbian crowds all but vanished across the country.

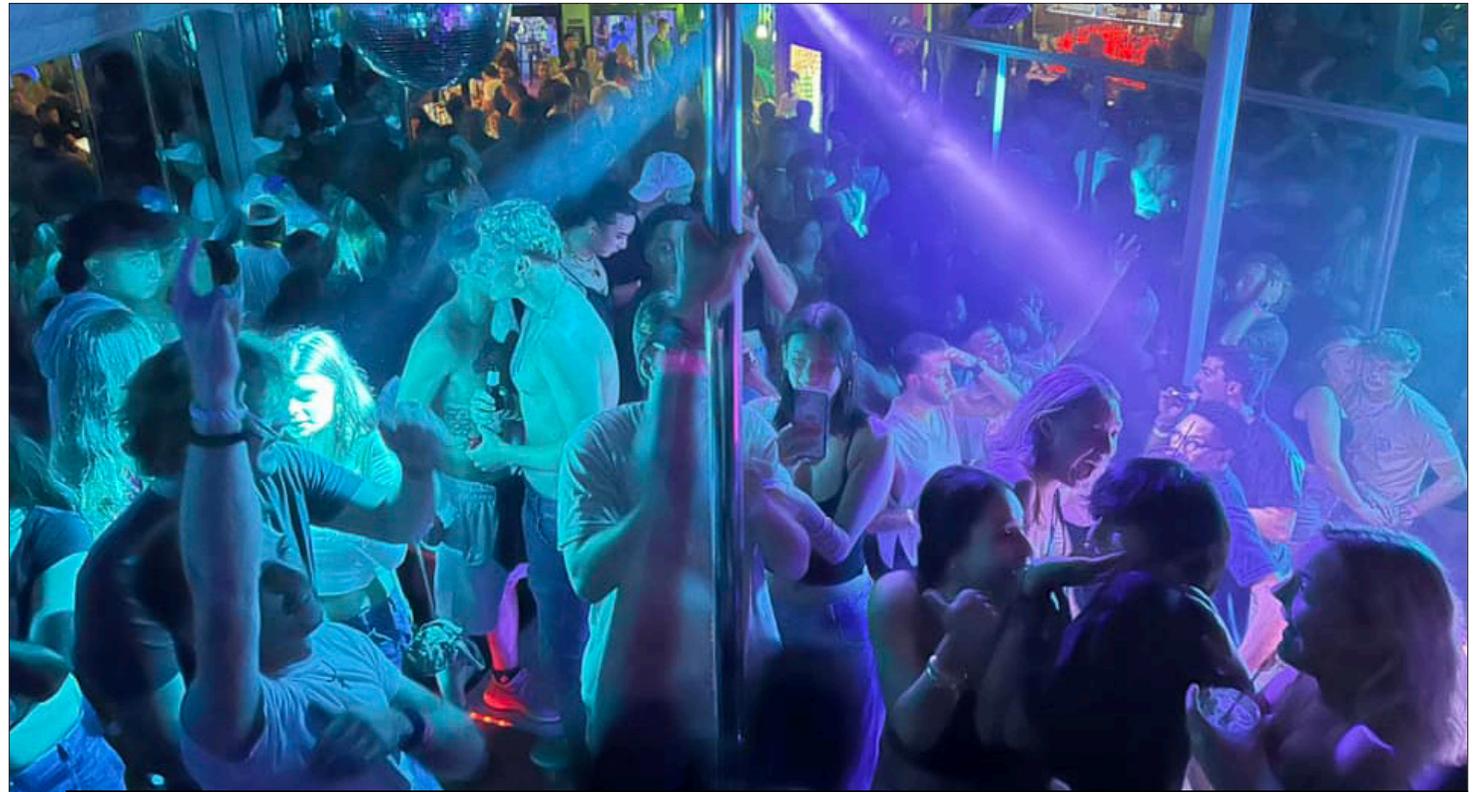
These days, it appears that tide is changing. Typically, nightclubs and bars have a lifespan of about five years, as proven by many right here in North Carolina that have outlived that expiration date many times over. It is quite possible, if not downright successful.

Why is that? Despite the legalization of same-sex marriage, in the years that have followed, our community has seen many major legal setbacks from right-wing politicians motivated by Donald Trump and his followers. Outright hate attacks generated by maniacal MAGA conservatives, aimed mostly at the trans and drag communities, have led to introspection and a need for support and connection within our own community.

Across the country and our state, bars and nightclubs geared towards the LGBTQ+ community regularly open and close. One thing's for sure: there are far more such businesses catering to our community now than there were just five years ago.

Ultimately – despite the fact we poured over the state of North Carolina – this list is by no means completely exhaustive, but it is extensive and as in-depth as possible.

Here's our look at many of the welcoming and specific LGBTQ+ nightclubs across North Carolina. You'll



A packed dance floor at Club Ibiza in Wilmington. CREDIT: Facebook

find them listed in alphabetical order by city or town and with a little bit of something for everyone in our community.

## Asheville

### O. Henry's

At 237 Haywood Street, O. Henry's is touted as having amazing staff, stiff drinks and one of the best drag shows in town. It's also one of the oldest bars in North Carolina

### Scandals Nightclub

Located at 11 Grove Street. It's a mix of dance club and stage performance.

### 27 Club

It's at 180 Patton Avenue and boasts a live performance bar and cocktail lounge. It's popular with a LGBTQ+ and straight clientele who flock to the club to see

counterculture Indie bands.

## Boone

### Lily's Snack Bar

The mountain town of Boone boasts Lily's Snack Bar, a LGBTQ+ welcoming bar that promises "dank sandwiches and drinks" and frequently hosts regular drag shows. It's located at 455 Blowing Rock Road.

## Charlotte

The Queen City appears to be queer central when it comes to LGBTQ+ bars and clubs in North Carolina, with a total of eight currently serving the city. Chances are, that number will increase in the near future.

### Bar Argon

Video and dance bar welcoming to the entire lgbtq+ community. Implodes drug

shows and dedicated video bar for relaxing. Located at 4544 South Boulevard.

## Chasers

This bar has been in business for over 30 years and continues to welcome LGBTQ+ patrons to the extended NoDa area. The club regularly hosts karaoke night, country dance nights, and FURNace, geared towards the gay bear community. They are located at 3217 The Plaza.

## Club Myxx

Established in 1992, Club Myxx describe their entertainment as culturally diverse and artistically funky with DJ Nikki the Kee spinning "the sounds of the underground." They're in uptown Charlotte at 225 N. Caldwell Street.

## Hattie's Tap and Tavern

Described as a friendly neighborhood joint that's great for a low-key night out, this bar allows you to bring along your canine pals and features live music, comedy shows, burlesque and more. While not specifically a LGBTQ+ bar, it's popular with the femme lesbian set. Also in the general NoDa area, their address is 2918 the Plaza.

## Petra's

Located in Plaza Midwood in the Thomas Street area, Petra's features live music on occasion and often attracts the neighborhood LGBTQ+ crowd. You'll find this business at 1919 Commonwealth Avenue.

## Scorpio

The granddaddy of them all. Big dance



View of the infamous Woodshed front porch in Charlotte. CREDIT: Facebook



An interior shot of Arcana Bar and lounge in Durham. CREDIT: Facebook

club with a huge history, drag performances, dancing and now in an all-new upscale location at 225 Fairwood Avenue in Charlotte's South End neighborhood.

**Sidelines**

It's located at 4544 South boulevard, just next door to Bar Argon. Sidelines is a laid-back drink and get comfortable kind of place, with pool tables and a friendly welcoming environment.

**The Woodshed**

Leather-bear-fetish bar that was a barbecue restaurant and previously somebody's house. It's fun and welcoming and located at 3935 Queen City Drive in West Charlotte, parallel to I-85.

**Durham Pinhook**

Located at 117 West Main Street, Pinhook describes itself as a "queer owned and operated 200 capacity music venue and event space with great sound and an amazing supportive and 'badass' staff." While they are a performance venue and not a bar and do not have regular hours, they frequently hold special events.

**Arcana Bar and Lounge**

Reportedly North Carolina's only lesbian bar, Arcana features a full bar, tarot readings, queer craft nights, figure drawing and more. They're located at 331 West Main Street, with an entrance in the rear.

**Greensboro Chemistry**

At 2901 Spring Garden Street, it's a popular dance club that features drag and multiple theme party events.

**Twist Lounge**

Touted as a friendly bar similar to a Queer Cheers, Twist Lounge features a comfortable environment with drag, lesbian-focused nights and fetish events. It's located at 435-M Dollar Madison Rd.

**Hickory Club Cabaret**

For more than 35 years Club Cabaret has provided a home for LGBTQ+ folks in Hickory and the surrounding area. Lauded for entertainment from top male and female impersonators, the club offers dancing and drink specials every Saturday night. Additionally, the space is available for special events. They're located at 101 North Center Street.

**Raleigh Legends**

has been in business for 33 years. A popular nightclub for the LGBTQ+ community, it features drag shows, a dance floor and plenty of space to get comfortable. It's currently located at 330 West Market Street, but there have been unconfirmed conversation of plans to move to a new address in the near future.

**Flex**

This club can be found at 615 West Hargett Street. It's been around for almost a quarter of a century now and features track shows, karaoke, underwear parties and male dancers.

**Ruby Deluxe**

This club is geared towards a youngish queer crowd. The features drag kings and queens, karaoke, seasonal parties and more, designed with the counterculture set in mind. It's located at 415 South Salisbury Street.

**Wilmington Club Ibiza**

This one appears to be quite the happening spot for Wilmington. Big dance parties, big drag and even a personalized drink menu with cocktails that have names like "Ibiza Sunset," "The Lesbian" and "Ninja Turtle." Their address is 118 Market Street.

**Winston-Salem Euphoria Dance and Nightclub**

Euphoria promotes an inclusive vibe that welcomes the LGBTQ+ community and allies to experience a daytime lounge, evening karaoke, dancing and various theme parties. They're located at 701 North Trade Street.



O. Henry's iconic Asheville signage framed by the Gay Diversity and Trans community flags CREDIT: Facebook

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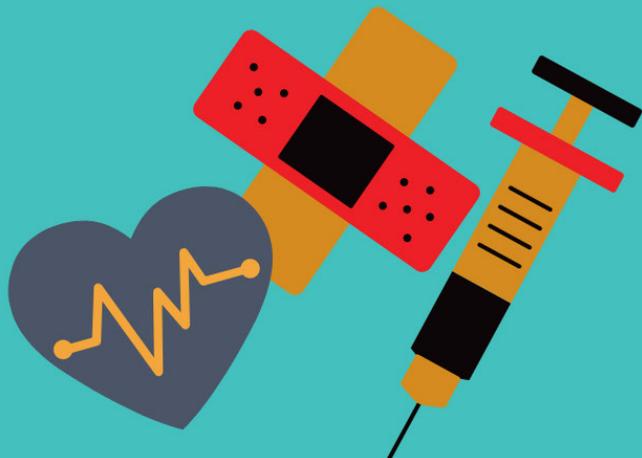
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# “Rage on being Queer, Black, Brilliant ... and Completely Over It”

Out In Print



by Terri Schlichenmeyer  
Qnotes Staff Writer

Rage: On Being Queer, Black, Brilliant... and Completely Over It by Lester Fabian  
c.2024, Tiny Reparations Books  
\$28.00  
288 pages



Author: Lester Fabian

That's where your blood pressure is, right there as high as it's ever been. Hoo, boy, are you angry. Your teeth are clenched, your eyes are slits, and you can trust yourself to speak in more than a growl. You're plenty steamed, and, as in the new book **“Rage” by Lester Fabian Brathwaite**, it shouldn't have to be this way.

When he came with his family to America from Guyana at just four years old, Brathwaite couldn't believe what his new home country offered. Malls, new kinds of food, cable television? Shirtless white men on TV and in magazines? Yes, please!

He's always had crushes on white men, but he loves being a gay Black man – even though racism, overt and subtle, can be an aggravation. When Brathwaite is on a dating app, white men sometimes dismiss him with a racial comment. He's heard and seen the “n-word” more than once, and he doesn't tolerate it. Wouldn't a greeting and a no thanks be less rude?

He is bothered by unnecessary meanness.

He is bothered in a different way by bodybuilding. Hot, muscular bodies to be exact, and he's sure that whoever created the sport was a genius. Brathwaite participates in bodybuilding himself sometimes – it's expensive and he does it for himself, not for other men – though he believes that gay men are bodybuilding's biggest subset. For sure, he's payed homage to his share of bodybuilders, superheroes in movies, and hot shirtless boys on TV.

There were many times, years ago, that Brathwaite ended up drunk and in a stranger's bed or looking for an old hook-up, and he was arrested once. Nearing thirty, though, he realized that that life wasn't what he wanted any more. His knees couldn't take it. Besides, he liked who he was, and he liked his blackness. He realized that he didn't

need anyone else to be a hero of his tale. He could do it better himself.

One thing's for certain: “Rage” lives up to its title.

At times, author Lester Fabian Brathwaite rails against so many things: racism and desire, club society, being a writer and editor, the generational differences between gay men, politics, and loss. At other times, he's outRAGEous and hilarious, writing to readers as though he's holding court in a cafe somewhere, and you'd better listen up.

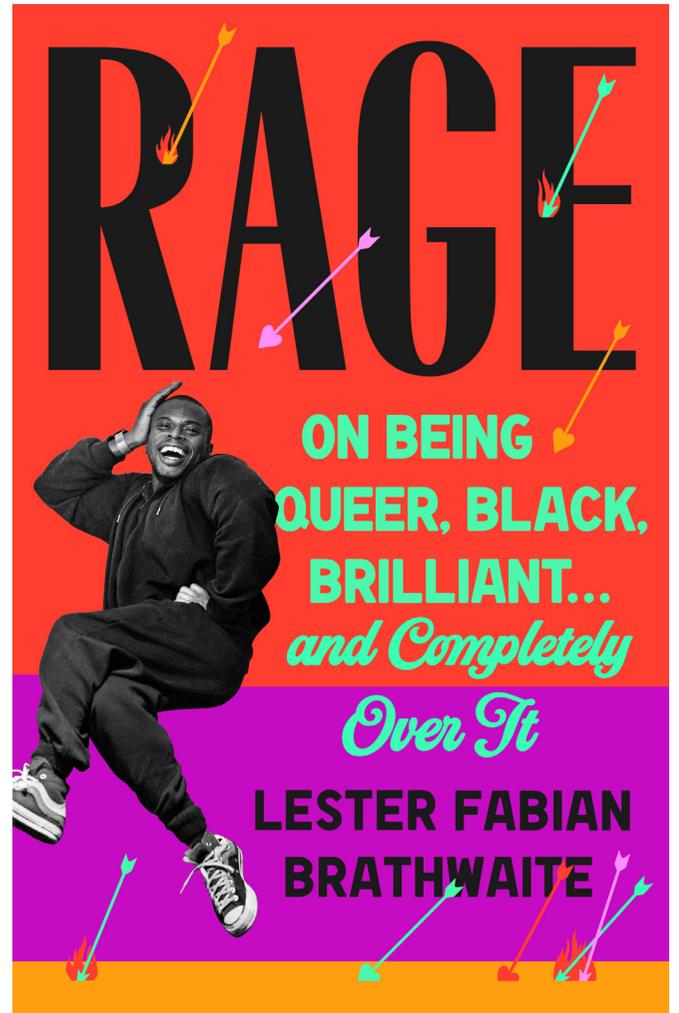
You should know that that means honesty – poking in the corners, calling things out for what they are, chastising people who need schooling on how to behave in a way that doesn't leave room for nonsense. This arrives unabashed and raw, accompanied by plenty of profanity.

You've been warned. And yet, Brathwaite's candor and his blunt talk is fresh and different.

This gay man doesn't pussy-foot around, and getting his opinions without fluff feels good and right. Readers will appreciate that, and they might come away educated.

Generally speaking, this ain't your

grandma's book, unless grandma likes real talk laced with profanity. If that's so, then get “Rage.” You'll both be mad for it, but if speed in a plot supersedes good characters, then step back. ::



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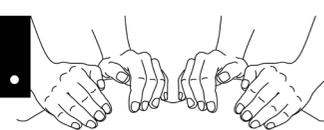
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# Will Ferrell and Harper Steele take trip of a lifetime in 'Will & Harper'

Documentary currently available on Netflix



by Jonathan Golian  
Qnotes Staff Writer

Stop reading if you've ever heard this one; Will Ferrell walks into a room and proclaims himself "One of the greatest actors in the world." Cheerful and upbeat, he starts to romanticize his time at SNL and talks about the writer friend he made that would end up being one of the best kinships of his life.

Then the music drops and Will introduces an email he received from his friend that reads, "Hey Will. Something I need you to know. I'll be transitioning to live as a woman."

Enter Harper Steele, the head writer of Saturday Night Live for decades, the scribe behind some of Ferrell's most memorable lines and one of the greatest comedic minds of our time. Most importantly, Steele is one of Will's best friends in the world.

Going into this film, I didn't necessarily

know what to expect, and I think that was a saving grace. By that, I mean just because Director Josh Greenbaum placed two funny people in front of us in their rawest forms, this, a comedy documentary, doesn't make. Instead, while the faces and quips may be familiar, we are given two people who would overthrow the world for one another and suddenly have questions about that reality.

Harper gets to read the rest of that email to us in the beginning, putting the words to her speech, one that she gave not only to Will, but to her friends and family, who have their own set of questions to ask. There is a potent fear placed from then on that travels with the duo most of the rest of the film; Harper is worried that Will might feel differently about her now that she's finally unveiled her true self to the world, and on the other side, Will is afraid for Harper in this seemingly new existence for her.

And at this point, their journey begins on a notion Will puts forth to Harper;



Harper Steele and Will Ferrell in a scene from 'Will & Harper.'  
CREDIT: Netflix

knowing that Harper feels hesitant to live her life the same way she had up until that point, Will proposes a road trip across the United States, a trek both of them have taken countless times, and do all the things Harper loved and still does, in a meaningful effort on Will's end to show nothing had truly changed in the end.

And off they went, charting all the way from NYC on Day 1, visiting various states and locations until they reach California.

Harper allows Will to ask all the things on his mind. Will does a great job of ribbing his friend, but cautiously, especially when he's concerned he might be crossing the line. I'll say that the journey was a relatively safe one, but as Harper points out later on, she was under the protection of his "star power," exclaiming during a powerful point in the film when the two go and see a Pacers game in Indiana, "I've never seen Jack Nicholson or Leonardo DiCaprio with a trans friend at a basketball game."

That same game was attended by Eric Holcomb, governor of Indiana at the

time, and while Will and Harper would find out only after talking with him briefly at the event, he had just signed a transgender medical care ban, SB 480, into the state's legislature.

A couple of scenes that stick out among the wealth of the many the movie holds: Harper wants to visit a road bar in the middle of Oklahoma, where she unexpectedly finds a confederate flag next to Trump flags. She asks Will to sit outside and allow her to, after setting up the speed-dial between them, interact by herself for a bit. Will is paranoid, pensive and outwardly fearful as he waits to hear from Harper. On the other side, Harper finds a place at the bar and speaks with the patrons as well as the owners about herself and her recent transition, chopping it up and having a grand old time.

This is a pattern audiences will see develop over the 114 minutes the film stretches to, and it bounces a back and forth rollercoaster viewing experience. Through talking with random strangers, visiting friends and family along the trek and often putting their portable lawn chairs in locations that range from a Walmart parking lot to sides of the Grand Canyon, we get to see a friendship that is unshakable. No matter what name or vision Harper might take on, Will is just glad to spend time with his friend, and see her doing well.

There is a question about the nature of friendships that is and isn't answered over the course of the film, and simply put, that answer, at least the way that I see it, is that even when names change as well as appearances, that person is still your person. In the end, that is what Will & Harper are to each other, and it is beautiful to witness.

"Will & Harper" is currently playing at The Independent Picture House in Charlotte through Sept. 23. The documentary streams on Netflix Sept. 27. ::

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# Eddie Izzard brings 'The Remix: The First 35 Years' tour to Charlotte

Knight Theater will host presentation Oct. 19



by Jonathan Golian  
Qnotes Staff Writer

**E**ddie Izzard has experienced a fantastic life. On stage, she's done comedy and classical theater. Izzard has provided her voice for animation and acted in movies like "Across the Universe" and television shows such as Netflix's "Kaos." She's also been a dedicated activist for the Labour Party in London, where she has been a cultural figure for decades.

Starting in 1987 at London's Comedy Store, and now celebrating 35 years with the Remix Tour, Izzard will recount her favorite bits and anecdotes from that span of time and get set for what the future holds.

We had an opportunity to speak with Izzard ahead of her Oct. 19 show in Charlotte at Knight Theatre.

**Jonathan Golian: Good Morning! How are you doing?**

**Eddie Izzard:** I'm fine, thank you. Where are you in the states?

JG: We're based in North Carolina.

EI: Ah, I know North Carolina. I was in Raleigh, and my makeup artist says, well, that's quite a breakfast in a local eatery. And so, we were in this diner to have breakfast, a classic old breakfast, and one of the waiting staff came and said to me, are you that comedian? I said yes. They said, "my boss uses a line of yours. It says, 'Why these? Where did you drive them, in a rainforest?'" Which was from Death Star Canteen, one of my sketches. I just thought, wow, that's amazing that it starts somewhere and gets all the way to North Carolina. So, it was quite a journey, this crazy little Death Star Canteen sketch. But that is something that will be appearing in my upcoming show.

**JG: Very cool! Well, I've been a fan for most of my life, starting any time your specials appeared on Comedy Central in the States. You've had quite a life, which you'll be showcasing on this tour. Do you have any favorites moments from your career, the '90s and on?**

EI: Well, in a way, it's very difficult to compare. I spent so long trying to get to America, and when New York finally said "we like you," we went. And then we played San Francisco and Los Angeles, and I kept pushing. Then, there's the HBO special that won a couple of Emmys. I was just hungry to play everywhere. I've played all 50 states now [in] America, and so each tour has had a different thing.

I used to think like Southern states, you know, I can't play the southern states. And then people, particularly from Texas, were coming up to the northern states when I was playing, and said, "Why are you not coming down to play Texas?" I said, "Okay, we'll come." And we went

to Dallas, the Majestic Theater in Dallas, and, and the guy running it said, "You really want to come here?" And I said, "Yeah, I think we should. And then the first gigs all sold out really quickly. So, I say, "Do I do another one?" So I like the idea that there's groovy people everywhere that grab hold of things. But, you know, coming to play America is the big thing, because America's got such a large population, I suppose, because the entertainment industry of America is so large and such a big engine, with the Hollywood sitting at the top of it, and rock and roll and everything. It's such a dream of a lot of people in Britain, in Europe, to play there, from around the world, to get it to work in America. I'm very pleased that I pushed hard and I got out to play. I loved the early days when I was playing the smaller theaters, and I've loved it when it's built up; the Hollywood Bowl, Madison Square Garden, I've loved them all. I mean, I got tired, but nothing's ever been a downside, even when playing in Meridian, Miss. And you wouldn't think that my stuff [would] go well in Mississippi, but we had a great audience there, and we stayed at the Holiday Inn where the people were really nice to us. So, yeah, I've been pushing since 1996, which was when I first got to America, so it's been a long time now. And I do love doing it.

**JG: Oh, I really love all of that. So, from the small clubs to the wide amphitheatres, which is your favorite type of venue to perform in?**

EI: Oh, both! I like the speed boats, and I like the ocean liners. That's how I see it. You know, if you're in a speed boat, that's a small gig, you've got to be a lot quicker. [But], if you're playing Madison Square Garden or Hollywood Bowl, those kinds of big, majestic places, you have to let the joke go out, and the laughter happen, and the joke happens at a slower speed. And they do delays in the mic. That's where I think comedy, or spoken word, is different from music. Whenever I change, there's a little trick. If you've been playing the small ones, and suddenly you go to the big ones, you will probably be out of kilter and going, well, I'm [saying] too much and going too fast. And again, the other way around, you go to the big ones down to the small ones, you find you're just too majestic or too slow, and you need to speed up and get quicker off the bat. It's a nice dynamic to be able to switch up and change. So, I do actually like playing both.

**JG: So, you are multifaceted. Not only do you have comedy, you're also a voice actor. The last thing I did see of yours was "Green Eggs & Ham" [Netflix]. I thought you did, a very, very good comedic villain.**

EI: Very good. I do love doing spoken word, because that's how my comedy can come out. It's a good place to play



Trans actor and comic Eddie Izzard will showcase her life through drama and comedy. CREDIT: Eddie Izzard, Knight Theater (Blumenthal Arts)

different voices. And you know Robin Williams did when he played "Aladdin." These are great opportunities where you can play around with voice work and hit some really funny stuff. I want to do my own series, in fact. Oh yeah. So to be able to do Hamlet, and then go out to do some real comedy as well. That's quite a nice thing to have in here, in your kit bag.

**JG: You're going to be starting out the tour performing Hamlet. What are some of your favorite roles that you've taken on in live theater?**

EI: Well, I got a Tony nomination for my turn at "A Day in the Death of Joe Egg." So that was great doing that. Then I started doing these solo versions of shows, including Charles Dickens' "Great Expectations" and then "Hamlet" has just been a recent one in New York. We triple extended New York, and then moved to the Orpheum Theater. Then the Chicago Shakespeare Theater said, come up with one of us to play in Chicago. And that was great. We got four out of four stars from the Chicago Tribune, and then played in London. I get to take it all around the world next year. I think Hamlet playing all the characters is a weird thing, but that's what I'm doing, because they wouldn't give me Hamlet. I'm not the kind of person to say "they need to build a hammer around this person," so I just built it around myself and, you know, being a trans person and playing Ophelia,

and Gertrude as well, trying to give honor to the female characters as well as the male characters, that's something that's been very important to me, and they've had positive reviews for my Ophelia, which I was very happy with. And I just love playing Hamlet. It's quite a tough two-hour thing, and you are on stage all the time playing against yourself. The public has such a great reaction to it, so we're just going to take it on and on.

**JG: At the end of 2024 and beyond, what do you have coming up after the Remix tour?**

EI: Hamlet across the world at 25 so spring "Hamlet" is going to be all around America. The autumn is going to be around Europe. I'm going to go to Australia, New Zealand with it. So, I'm just going to relentlessly tour my Hamlet. And I mean the series "Chaos," which is on Netflix. I have a supporting role in that, but I love doing that. I'm just going to keep doing drama and surreal comedy, but mainly I'm emphasizing "Hamlet" next year. So, it's comedy this year, right now, for two months in America, and then into drama next year.

Eddie Izzard's "The Remix: The First 35 Years" tour comes to the Knight Theater on Oct. 19. Tickets are now available online.

<https://www.blumenthalarts.org/events/detail/eddie-izzard> ::

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