BIDEN SIGNS EXECUTIVE ORDER TO FIGHT ANTI-LGBTQ+ LEGISLATION

President Joe Biden issued an executive order Wednesday, June 15, to counter a “avalanche of discriminatory legislative attacks against LGBTQ+ children and families” from red states in recent months. Pride flags were featured as part of the decor at the event. “Pride is back in the White House,” said the President.

What is the Patriot Front?

White supremacist group plotted to attack Cœur d’Alene Pride

by Mike Andrews
SGN Staff Writer

What is the Patriot Front?

Coeur d’Alene police now say that all 31 of the men they arrested on June 11 were members of that organization — including eight from the group’s home base in Texas.

According to the police, they responded to call about “a little army” of people with masks and shields getting into a U-Haul van near the local Pride event. On investigating, police say they found riot shields, fake bullet-proof shields, and other equipment in the van, and “at least one” smoke grenade.

Pointing “outside the frame”

Good Luck to You, Leo Grande
writer Katy Brand and director Sophie Hyde

by Sara Michelle Fetters
SGN Staff Writer

It started with a single idea: a lone woman, in her late fifties, maybe early sixties, anxiously waiting in a hotel room for a young male escort to knock on the door.

“I don’t write down all my ideas,” admits comedian, actor, and screenwriter Katy Brand candidly. “I just work on the basis that if [an idea] is genuinely good enough, it’ll stick around and I’ll remember it. If it sticks around for long enough, then I’ll start working on it. This was one of those ideas.”
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Local News

High school walkout in Kalama
Students support Trans classmate after assault

by Mike Andrew
SGV Staff Writer

Dozens of students at Kalama High School walked out on June 13, in solidarity with a transgender classmate who was assaulted in the school’s hall.

Shortly after the walkout occurred, the school district was put on lockdown after Kalama police said a student made a “threat of violence” against the students walking out in support of their classmate.

Kalama is a town of less than 3,000 people in Cowlitz County, near Longview.

According to local TV station KOIN-6, the Trans student was repeatedly kicked with steel-toed boots and was subsequently taken to the hospital for treatment. He has returned to class, according to the school district. He was not identified by name in the KOIN story.

Katrinarick Mertens, a sophomore at Kalama High School, described the incident to KOIN: “The student had been on the ground, begging [the assault] to stop, and he just kept going,” she said.

The assault occurred on Monday, June 6, as students were leaving school for the day.

Students and parents told KOIN that this assault was part of a pattern of harassment and violence at the school.

In addition to transphobic actions and homophobic remarks, incidents of Nazi salutes in classrooms and locker rooms were described by students in conversations with KOIN. Nazi images are also prominent on social media posts on Kalama community pages.

Student Lillie Cierley said that complaints to school officials brought no results.

“It’s just really heartbreaking to not be taken seriously when our lives are at stake,” Cierley said.

Cierley and her mother, Melissa, test every hour to ensure she is safe. Melissa Cierley told KOIN that she felt she had to do that after a group of boys sexually harassed Lillie.

“There’s a certain population that seems to be able to get away with whatever they want,” Melissa Cierley said.

Rick Mertens and Lillie Cierley said they’d repeatedly told school administrators about incidents that made them feel unsafe at school, but their complaints brought no action from school officials.

“You’d think that after so many students come to them about hate speech and going to them that we need these bullies to stop, that they would do something. We shouldn’t have to come to this point to rally together for them to listen to us,” Rick Mertens said.

Kalama School District Communications Manager Nick Shumau declined to discuss the situation with KOIN, noting the school district’s student privacy protections. “You do have this frustration that it appears on the surface that not enough is being done,” Shumau said. “There are a lot of emotions that we understand it can feel like that, it can feel like nothing is happening.”
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Pride Journey: Salt Lake City

by Joey Amato
Special to the SGN

For years I have heard about Salt Lake City’s thriving LGBTQ community, but in my time as a writer I had yet to experience it firsthand. The Advocate even called Salt Lake City one of the ten "Queerest Cities in America." Recently, I had the opportunity to travel to the Beehive State with ska artist Andy, the Andromeda of my heart, and 16-year-old friend and internationally known EDM musician Joey Suarez, where we had a chance to revel in the city’s attractions and cultural scene and see what all the hype was about.

Our first stop on the sightseeing tour was the fabulous Hotel Monaco, part of the Kimpton collection of hotels. Kimpton is well-known for being one of the most LGBTQ-friendly chains in the country, so I knew we were in good hands. The property features a welcoming lobby, fitness center, two culinary options: Bambu and The Vault and is within walking distance to almost every attraction in the city.

Begin your first day in Salt Lake City with a trip to Bambu, a wonderful little establishment offering freshly baked goods and a variety of homemade breakfast items. I decided to try the Roasted Beef & Avocado Toast which was served with potatoes and organic greens. This was a perfect option for those who enjoy a savory breakfast item over something sweet, although, even though I love dessert, I have a nice selection of sweet treats to choose from if you prefer.

Just a short drive away from downtown is the Natural History Museum of Utah. The beautifully designed building blends perfectly with the natural surroundings of the mountains and contains quite the selection of dinosaur fossils and gemstones, most of which were discovered locally. The museum boasts an extensive paleontology program and possesses nearly 30,000 specimens in their collection.

Next, swing by Tracy Aviary, one of only two free standing aviaries in the country and say hello to the Andromeda condor as well as the Chilean flamingos. The aviary also offers unique experiences where guests can participate in raptor up close and personal with some of their feathered friends. Don’t forget to stop by the South American Pavilion featuring 30 South American birds nestled amongst lush plants in a unique indoor/outdoor exhibit.

Salt Lake City’s international culinary scene is something the city is proud of and one of its shining stars is a Japanese restaurant called Takashi. Joey and I ordered four dishes to share, and each was prepared to perfection. Our favorites included the Magic Dragon roll as well as the Tiger’s Roll featuring tiger shrimp tempura with spicy crab, kaiware sprouts, unagi and avocado, topped with eel sauce and sesame seeds.

For some fun entertainment, head to Why Kiki, a tiki bar themed venue just a few blocks from the hotel which recently started weekend Drag Lunch – no, not exactly brunch, as some performances occur after standard brunch hours. The intimate venue is a wonderful place to catch a performance by one of Salt Lake’s fabulous drag performers, while sipping a delicious tropical cocktail.

Adventure seekers can go on a hike along one of the city’s numerous trails. On one crisp morning, we headed to a trail named "The Living Room" due to the rock formation at the top of the mountain that resembles a couch, or so I’ve been told. We made it about three-fourths the way to the top before we had to stop from exhaustion due to the altitude. Yes, I’ll blame the altitude. Don’t despise, there are many picturesque vantage points along the way to capture that perfect Instagram photo.

For dinner, head to Marco’s, a tapas style Greek restaurant which offers a variety of traditional dishes as well as some modern twists of Greek specialties. While Joey dined on a scrumptious lamb burger, I tried the Garden, which were grilled shrimp cooked in a Greek coffee BBQ sauce served over scallions. We decided to share an order of Spanakopita which is a savory phyllo filled pastry stuffed with feta and spinach and served with an artichoke cream sauce. I love Spanakopita and Marco’s didn’t disappoint. However, the best part of the meal was the cinnamon ice cream, which was probably one of my favorite ice cream dishes ever!

When I lived in Nashville, I published an LGBTQ magazine called UNITE and one of our issue’s featured country music superstar Eric Church on the cover. He is country music’s answer to Bruce Springsteen, so much in fact, one of his biggest hit songs is titled “Springsteen.” We had the opportunity to attend the Eric Church concert at the Vivint Arena, home of the Utah Jazz. While it would have been fun to experience a basketball game, hearing 15,000 people sing Church’s hit songs was quite memorable.

After the concert, it was time to explore Salt Lake City’s nightlife. Located on Harvey Milk Boulevard is Milk’s, a swanky new LGBTQ club that would rival that of most major cities. Milk’s offers a huge dance-floor, stage, patio, and table seating to enjoy cocktails or food. The eye candy was abundant, and the bar staff was quite friendly. All the entertainment occurs in one large open room so the scene mixes between drag and dancing most of the evening.

Another bar worth visiting is The Sun Trapp, which is within walking distance of Hotel Monaco. With limited time, it was impossible to visit all the nightlife establishments, but I think I got a taste of what Salt Lake City had to offer. I began to see why the city was voted one of the most queer-friendly cities in the country.

Enjoy the Journey!
 Mighty Moose Comics provides new heroes for a shifting time

by Lindsay Anderson  
SGV Contributing Writer

Calling all comic enthusiasts! A special hero is hiding in the shadows of Victoria Mall in Bellevue. Sitting just inside the main entrance is Mighty Moose Comics, a quaint comic shop with all kinds of intriguing titles for everyone, from collectors to casual readers.

Owned and operated by Ian Strasser, Mighty Moose has provided all of the newest and most talked-about titles east of Seattle for the last seven years. However, it has a legacy that stretches far beyond that.

The history of the Moose

"I've been in the business for 40 years, since 1982," Strasser said as he recalled his first comic store, "I had the same business on the East Coast, New Jersey, for 32 years, and then I sold that, and I moved here."

Before Strasser was the face behind Mighty Moose, the store he ran was called "Fat Moose Comics." "A girl in college a million years ago, for no reason that I was aware of then or now, started calling me Moose. When I was engaged to be married to my fiancée at the time, I was looking for a catch-phrase for the store. I probably weighed about 50 pounds more than I do now, and at one in the morning, she goes, 'You're a pretty damn fat moose, why don't you call it Fat Moose Comics?' and that's how we got the original store name," Strasser said with a laugh.

"When I moved here, I was going to be Super Moose, but a store [in Utah, Idaho, Montana, somewhere already was a Super Moose. So instead of creating confusion with the distributor, I just went with Mighty Moose," he continued.

Mighty Moose is a fitting name for the small store that packs a big punch. The walls are lined from floor to ceiling with all kinds of comics and graphic novels. But that's not all the store has to offer. Merchandise with everybody's favorite heroes — DC or Marvel — is available, from T-shirts to posters and even life-sized cut-outs of iconic characters.

A real-life comic hero

While the store has something for everyone, the real heart of Mighty Moose Comics is the man sitting behind the counter. "I always just try to be welcoming and friendly. I'm often told I am, relative to other stores, where maybe people aren't greeted warmly or at all. So I just guess being welcoming is the vibe," Strasser humbly said of his business's unique environment. "The vibe is one of a community, where people come in and discuss comic books and so forth," he added.

The layout of Mighty Moose may seem chaotic at times, but that's just because the store is constantly changing. Strasser doesn't have specific genres highlighted per se, because of the constant overlap of different stories and the number of new books he receives each week.

"Things are always shifting. There are so many new books each week, new titles, new items, you know. It would be hard to just have a horror section and a sci-fi section and an LGBTQ section, because things are always shifting," he explained.

But one thing tends to stay the same: Strasser's dedication to the art of comics. He learned the value of the trade the hard way, "I bought my first comic book when I was seven, and that was 58 years ago, that was 1964," he said. "I did that for about eight years, and then I threw out everything I owned. I don't know why, but what I threw out was worth about a million dollars today. Ehh, it's whatever — you can't change the past.

While Strasser cannot recall why he decided to quit comics after eight years, he'll never forget the intriguing special that drew him back in. "I was walking back from lunch at my first job out of college, and I saw a comic book being sold at a newsstand. It caught my eye," he said. "It was Uncanny X-Men issue 142, and it was the second part of a two-part story, and what intrigued me was on the front cover. It said, 'In this issue, everybody dies.' I was like whoa, what is that about, so I bought it, and it was cool, and like I say, it got me back into it..."

"A year later, I bought my first store."

Over the years, Strasser has hopped on many different trends and bandwagons when it comes to comics, but he says today he tends to gravitate toward stories that draw him in, just like the X-Men comic did all those years ago.

"When I was young, I bought Marvel exclusively for a while, I bought DC exclusively for a while, I went through an Archie Comics phase. But now, after reading comics for about five decades, I don't even follow writers or artists anymore, which some people like to do. If a project comes out, whatever it is, and it's interesting to me, I'll look at it, I'll read it," Strasser said.

LGBTQ+ comics and queering up classic characters

One trend Strasser, and other comic enthusiasts, have picked up on in recent years has been more LGBTQ+ inclusive comics. "There are comics that are specifically geared to the LGBTQ community like RWBY, DC Pride books... Sometimes we order books that are memoirs, sort of like documentaries, where someone writes what it was like to grow up gay, to be accepted or not accepted, whatever their story is," Strasser explained.

While these stories tend to be more and more common, Mighty Moose hasn't seen much of an increase in sales of LGBTQ+-specific stories. "We just don't sell a lot of that stuff, even though we highlight it, as you can see," Strasser said as he gestured to the many stacks of LGBTQ+ comics, from DC's Pride edition covers to Harris Quinna to a new Superman spin-off.

The inclusion of more LGBTQ+ characters and plotlines in popular comics has become a bit of a controversy with some of Strasser's regulars. "Some of my customers have been saying that if you're going to create a Guy, Lesbian, or Queer character, you need to create a whole new universe, and I agree with that," Strasser said.

"If you take characters that people are familiar with and, they know, and you just change them outright — like Marvel comics took Iron Man and made a female Iron Man — they're just taking established characters and changing them," he continued.

Photo by Lindsay Anderson

see MIGHTY MOOSE page 10
Fire Island: Weekend plans call for a weekend read

by Terri Schlichenmeyer
Special to the SGN

**FIRE ISLAND: A CENTURY IN THE LIFE OF AN AMERICAN PARADISE**
JACK PARLETT
© 2022 Hanover Square Press
$27.99
272 pages

Geographically speaking, Manhattan and Fire Island are a mere sixty miles apart. Sixty miles — and half a world.

Stretched out and very narrow but walkable, the island is home to several vacation communities. Two of them, Cherry Grove and Fire Island Pines, both located in about the middle of the island, feature prominently in LGBTQ history.

Author Jack Parlett says that Native Americans sold Fire Island to the Europeans for a pittance, after which activities there became shady and possibly illegal. By the 1820s, however, it was a hot vacation spot for the elite; certain parts were the place for landing romance, too, which Parlett says was a sign of the future.

Famous men like poet Walt Whitman were big fans of Fire Island, and over the next century, a then-quiet queer utterance began to grow there. Sometimes, it grew with families and children in the picture, the latter raised by nonconformists and theater people.

Even so, despite these many changes, Parlett says that Fire Island wouldn't be what it is today were it not for a devastating hurricane that hit the island on the afternoon of September 21, 1938, resulting in a real estate bust. Cottage prices fell significantly, and vacationing there suddenly became affordable for Gay New Yorkers.

Throughout the twentieth century, Fire Island became a playground for performers, thinkers, and writers such as James Baldwin and W.H. Auden. It was a nexus of controversy for locals, who objected to nude bathing. It was the source of embarrassment for Noel Coward. And it allowed everyday Gay men and women to dance, drink, and party freely. Later on, it was a place to mourn.

Considering that this is a book about a getaway destination, *Fire Island* isn't much of a vacation read. It's actually pretty dry, in fact, filled with people that were once very famous but aren't exactly household names anymore. Their dramas and the love triangles they struggled with are mildly interesting, in the way that you might perceive great-grandma's old *Confidential* magazine on the attic.

And yet — the history. Parlett offers a lot of solid information beyond those tired scandals to further illustrate how Fire Island came to be a Gay hot spot and why that was important. These tales envelop the rest of the island, as well as current events in America as a whole, and the impact those outside influences had on LGBTQ life, even today.

More scholarly than not, this book also includes a fair bit of memoir for readers who are looking for something less fictional. If you want a book for fun, though, *Fire Island* is probably not a beach read.

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**MIGHTY MOOSE**
continued from 9

"It makes no sense given the history, given some of the main characters’ decades-long histories — it makes no sense really. It’s catering to a demographic that doesn’t exist in big numbers at all. In society, yes, there’s plenty of people in the LGBTQ community, but they’re not a huge proportion yet with comic books." According to Strasser, just announcing that established and beloved characters that have existed for decades are now queer is lazy writing. He thinks a better way to introduce LGBTQ+ heroes is to create new characters that are queer from the very beginning.

"[I] would have had more sense, and wouldn’t have affected the old-timers, and wouldn’t have given the people in the [Queer] community something about which they could say, ‘Oh, this is my own. I don’t have to latch on to something else that I can’t relate to or doesn’t grab me. This is my own thing.’ And that is what I think they should have done," he said.

"They should have made brand-new characters reflect all the values, the morals, and the positive aspects of the LGBTQ community and give them their universe and their world," Strasser continued. "And that’s not because it should be separate, and it’s not like we should not accept that. It’s just that it would work so much better, because the community would have their own thing."

He noted that some writers have already begun doing this. "Superman: Son of Kal-El has been around for almost a year now," he said as he motioned toward a copy of the latest DC hero. "In 2021, DC announced a new line of Superman comics featuring the son of Superman, who also happens to be bisexual."

"A lot of people got mad and said, ‘How can you make Superman Gay? How could you do that!’ Strasser added. ‘Of course, those are ignorant people. This is not Superman. It’s Superman’s son, so there’s nothing wrong with this,’ he said.

Some comic book fans don’t want to listen, however. "I’ve had a few customers, these are gay in their forties and fifties who have left the hobby — [who] said this is not what I’ve been doing for 30 or 40 years, and you’re changing everything," Strasser said.

Despite the complaints from small-minded individuals, Strasser says he will continue to sell comics that feature queer characters, like *Superman: Son of Kal-El*, especially if people buy them. Just like the Mighty Moose, the world is constantly shifting and changing, and Strasser is ready to see what comes will do next to keep up with the times.

Photos by Lindsey Anderson
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Neill, Dern, and Goldblum return, but *Jurassic World:: Dominion* is sadly dumb without the fun

by Sara Michelle Felters
SGN Staff Writer

*Jurassic World:: Dominion* Theaters

There is not one film born from Michael Crichton's *Jurassic Park* that I have not enjoyed on some level. Starting with Steven Spielberg's 1993 Academy Award-winning sensation directly adapted from Crichton's novel, all the way through 2018's goopy, somewhat self-contained prehistoric horror creation—*Jurassic World: Fallen Kingdom*, I've always found things to enjoy about each installment in the series.

This makes my reaction to *Jurassic World: Dominion* lamentably frustrating. While there are some strong moments, and even if a couple of the major set pieces do work well, there is a contrived, unrelenting stupidity to this latest sequel that drove me batty. It's as if returning director Colin Trevorrow (*Jurassic World, Safety Not Guaranteed*) and his core creative team — notably screenwriting collaborators Emily Carmichael (Pacific Rim: Uprising) and Derek Connolly (Kong: Skull Island) — didn't know what to do after the events of the last film. They rehab ideas and scenarios from the past adventures as if they were afraid to do anything new or inventive, instead choosing to rely on a plethora of same-old, same-old to keep their audience mindlessly entertained.

What am I getting at? *Fallen Kingdom* concludes with human clone Maisie Lockwood (Isabella Sermon) releasing all of the surviving Jurassic World theme park dinosaurs out into the world, saving them from certain death. This act fundamentally changes everything. No longer is humanity separated from the prehistoric by giant walls built on secluded islands out in the middle of a vast ocean. Now dinosaurs may roam where they please, and the implications of this areundenably intriguing.

But other than a few early hints as to how nature will adapt to the globe have decided to deal with the sudden change in the food chain status quo — including an admittedly bonkers set piece in Malta featuring two escaped *Triceratops rex* and a lethal trio of a trained velociraptors — Trevorrow and company do precious little with this concept. They retreat back to the relative safety of a secluded compound run by a secretive conglomerate where dinosaurs roam freely yet are still cut off from the rest of the world, and that's too bad.

Even with the core *Jurassic Park* triumvirate of Alan Grant (Sam Neill), Ellie Sattler (Lauren Dern), and Ian Malcolm (Jeff Goldblum) reunited for the first time since Spielberg's original picture, precious little matters. While we get a few new dinosaurs, specifically the enormous Giganotosaurus and the razor-clawed Therizinosaurus, most of the narrow escapes and feats of daring do fail to generate suspense or tension. There's a high been-there, done-that quotient, and it's a problem Trevorrow is never able to overcome, even with a massive budget and a skilled core of visual technicians.

There are two main plots, both melding together into one once all of the characters run into one another at this top-secret, high-tech dinosaur hideaway. In the first, Grant and Sattler end up back together when they are invited by their old friend Malcolm to tour the Biosyn facility run by philanthropist billionaire Lewis Dodgson (Campbell Scott). Malcolm's uncovered a connection between the corporate behemoth — tasked by the world's major governments to study dinosaurs — and a plague of mutant locusts devasting grain crops in the US.

The second involves Owen Grady (Chris Pratt) and Claire Dearing (Bryce Dallas Howard). They've been living in seclusion to protect the velociraptor Blue from nefarious entities that would like to study and potentially use them. When kidnappers snatch the teenager along with Blue's newborn baby raptor, Grady and Dearing take off after their hot pursuit. After a brief stop in Malta, where they reunite with fellow former Jurassic World animal wrangler Barry Sebold (Omar Sy), they find themselves on a plane to the Biosyn compound, courtesy of rogue ace pilot Kayla Watts (DeWanda Wise).

Obviously, Dodgson is up to no good. It is also really apparent that, no matter what their intentions, keeping dinosaurs — not to mention those pesky mutant locusts — in a single compound, no matter how large it may be, is going to prove to be a very bad idea. Things break down. Creatures get unleashed. People get eaten. Grant, Sattler, Malcolm, Grady, Dearing, and Watts join forces to save the day. Rinse. Wash. Repeat.

I've grown to like Howard over the course of her three *Jurassic World* appearances, and even though Dearing should have gone to jail after the first film, she's still developed into a rather interesting character who I enjoy spending time with. But it may have been a mistake to put her and Pratt into the same story as Neill, Dern, and Goldblum. That trio generates chemistry just by walking into the same room. Their collective magic leaps off the screen. Pratt and Howard? Their supposedly tender embraces and sensual kisses have all the affection of a rock cantaloupe, and it's as if their characters have grown further apart during their trilogy instead of closer together.

There is still fun to be had here, I'm always up for an angry *Triceratops rex* smackdown, and that animal's face-off against the Giganotosaurus is well worth the wait. That aforementioned Malta action sequence is pretty terrific, while almost any scene between Neill and Dern warmed even the most hardened corners of my heart and urged me to cut that sequel some slack.

But this is the first time I've been truly disappointed by one of these dinosaur adventures. As silly and tame as many of the other entries have been, even at their worst, they've remained dumb fun. Giant B-movies reveling in old-school giant-monster histronics reminiscent of goopy 1950s efforts like *Them*, *Tarantula*, and *The Deadly Mantis*. Unfortunately, more often than not, *Jurassic World:: Dominion* is dumb without the fun, and that just makes me sad.
Charming *Leo Grande* escorts viewers into a sex-positive exploration of self-acceptance

by Sara Michelle Feters
SGN Staff Writer

**GOOD LUCK TO YOU, LEO GRANDE**

Nancy Stokes (Emma Thompson) is waiting for someone. She's pacing back and forth in her rather antiseptic hotel room, equal parts dreading and fantasizing about the knock on the door she knows will soon come. Having been widowed for just over two years, the retired religious education teacher has decided to do the unthinkable: she's hired a young male escort named Leo Grande (Daryl McCormack) to entertain her for a couple of hours, and now that he's on the verge of arriving, she's no longer sure about going through with their rendezvous.

Split into four acts, *Good Luck to You, Leo Grande* begins like a two-character, one-set screwball comedy by way of Howard Hawks or Billy Wilder before building into an incisively emotional, intimately human melodrama in the Tennessee Williams by way of John Cassavetes. It culminates in a witty, cathartic explosion of humility, intimacy, and acceptance that's decidedly feminine and refreshingly unique, with writer Katy Brand and director Sophie Hyde delivering an introspective sensibility that kept me on my toes.

During the first encounter between Nancy and Leo, it's immediately clear who these characters are. The former is a sexually impacted woman who was handcuffed by a sexually unsavory marriage and a position of authority she felt forced her to live up to a conservative, uptight image. The latter is a confident exquisitely, a young man who has done such a terrific job of transforming himself into a fantasy of lust and longing that he barely remembers the real person underneath.

While it apparent how things will progress — she'll learn to loosen up, discovering aspects of herself as a woman that give her new perspectives on self-empowerment and individual liberties, he'll reconnect with the person behind the fantasy and learn that he must own up to his actions if he'll ever find lasting happiness — it's how the narrative gets there that matters. Brand gives Nancy and Leo agency. She does not ridicule or make other people the butt of any joke.

Instead, Brand allows them to just be. They are real people, laughing at one another's jokes, poking fun when the moment feels right, and offering comfort and support when it appears it is needed the most. There is an unceasing back-and-forth between Nancy and Leo, one that is seductively comforting yet never mitigates or minimizes the underlining seriousness at the heart of their encounters.

It's no shock at all, at least not to me, but Hyde does a magnificent job handling all facets of the production. It was clear from her audaciously ambitious narrative debut, *52 Tuesdays*, that this director knows her stuff, and that her background in documentary filmmaking gives her a journalistic insight into human nuances that is continually fascinating. Hyde knows how to get to the truth with sly, devious ease, and how she orchestrates Nancy and Leo's encounters is proof of that.

This is especially clear in the framing of the film as the narrative progresses. Working closely with cinematographer Bryan Mason, who also collaborated with the director on both *52 Tuesdays* and *Animals*, Hyde initially writes a formal, almost sitcom-like or pre-Code 1930s visual style to bring Nancy and Leo's first meeting to life. But in subsequent scenes, things become far more fluid. The camera begins to dance around them, generating an increasingly frenetic and fast-paced atmosphere that's

right in line with Nancy beginning to embrace her sexuality and the repercussions born from this.

Things gain additional focus during the climax, but there is still a little, elegantly limber aesthetic to how Hyde and Mason handle things that wasn't present during that initial meeting. The director lays a series of visual clues as to how everything is going to turn out, and you do it from the first second Nancy is introduced. The audience only realizes this has been the case all along right about the same moment the former teacher inspects herself once again in a hotel mirror, this time with a level of confident understanding that previously did not exist.

Newcomer McCormack is great, channeling so much charismatic machismo that he's like a Harlequin romance cover model come to life. But there is so much more than that resting behind his eyes, simple truths that come into the light only after Nancy and Leo get back together in ensuing appointments. The young actor is marvelous, and I'm genuinely curious to see what sort of performances he has in store for us.

But this is Thompson's movie, Stop. End of sentence. The two-time Academy Award winner is spectacular. Thompson was born to play Nancy, which isn't a surprise, considering that Brand bravely wrote the character with the actor in mind. It's what she does with it that's so mind-blowing.

This is a fearless raw performance, and Thompson never overplays her hand. I was continually in awe, and I guarantee I'll be thinking about Nancy and her transformative journey for the rest of 2022. I can say the same about *Good Luck to You, Leo Grande* as well. As slight as much of it is, there is something so distinctly personal about what Brand and Hyde are doing that it's doubtful their sublime little comedy-drama will dissipate from my memory anytime soon. Its sex-positive messaging is a lasting impression, and I'm certain I'll be far from the only one who ends up feeling the same.

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Daryl McCormack and Emma Thompson in *Good Luck to You, Leo Grande* - Photo courtesy of Searchlight Pictures

Emma Thompson and Daryl McCormack in *Good Luck to You, Leo Grande* - Photo courtesy of Searchlight Pictures

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**INTERVIEW continued from cover**

"I had this very strong image of Nancy waiting, having done this thing that she always said she'd do, and now it's going to happen — and she's terrified. Then there's the knock at the door. It opens and there he is."  

This is where the seeds of the May-December dramatic comedy Good Luck to You, Leo Grande were planted. The story begins with recently widowed Nancy Stokes (Emma Thompson) in that very hotel room, waiting for escort Leo Grande (Daryl McCormack) to arrive. What follows is a four-part mystery in which the two keep coming back together to explore, not just their bodies but what it means to make an authentic human connection as well.  

But it was the central mystery of what would happen once that door did open and Leo Grande walked into the hotel room that got Brand excited and kept her writing. "I just wanted to hear them talk," she said with a smile. "I wanted to hear what they would say, I wanted to be there about two interesting people in an unusual situation. I wanted to talk about themes about pursing our own sexual pleasure, why we feel guilty and ashamed about that, and also this vocational aspect of sex work that some sex workers have. I've always found that really interesting."  

It didn't take much convincing for 23 Tuesdays and Anomalisa filmmaker Sophie Hyde to come on board the project. It was the middle of the pandemic and I was in Australia," she explained, "and we couldn't leave Australia at the time. I got this email [saying] there was a film they wanted me to consider. It's a woman, and she wanted to have good sex for the first time in her life. She's been unsatisfied and hires a sex worker. And the woman's going to be Emma Thompson, and it's all basically in one room.  

"I was like, okay, let's do it. Just seemed like magic. That's an irresistible combination, and I know how smart Emma is and also how emotional. Very quickly I was talking to Katy and Emma about what else could we do, because it was a very early draft [of the script]. There was also so much potential in this idea: sex, power dynamics, etc. It was exciting."  

For Brand, it was important that Nancy never be the butt of any joke. This was key. "There weren't going to be any jokes where the audience was laughing at [either of them]," she stated emphatically. "If Nancy does something that's a bit ridiculous, then let's have Leo laugh at her in the room, but in a nice way. Let's find the ridiculousness and let's have them (Nancy and Leo) cultivate that. It's not just us finding them funny; they find each other funny. That was something I wanted to make sure happened. This was really important to me."  

This was something the director was immediately on board with right from the first scene. "Katy had that opening scene nailed," says Hyde. "The whole opening meeting is very similar to the first draft. Katy had this idea of Nancy pacing in the hotel room, having made this decision, and so already it all felt quite physical. Emma is just so skilful that she has an ability to create that button-ups but without it feeling clichéd."  

Emma knew the character. She felt clear about that really quickly. Even in the first read-through, I was like, put the camera up. Let's go. But Emma was like all of us. She wanted to work further and go further into what it could be, not just do the first version of her performance."  

**Writing the screenplay**  

The writer did the one thing you're never supposed to do when crafting a screenplay: she wrote the character for a specific actor to portray without knowing if they'd even read her work, let alone sign on to make the film, but she was undeterred.  

"Her voice did inspire it," Brand said, laughing.  

"The more I dared to imagine [Emma] saying the lines, the more I enjoyed writing more lines, because I just thought, this line is going to be so funny when she says it," explained Brand. "I thought, she's going to play this so perfectly, comedy to drama, all of it.  

"But I always knew that, while I was really enjoying writing this with Emma Thompson's voice in my head, no one was ever going to see it. I thought maybe I'd put it on in a little theater somewhere."  

The screenwriter couldn't have been more wrong on that front. "It sent it to [producer] Debbie Gray," Brand recalled, "and she immediately said, 'Let's make this.' At that point I admired I did kind of write it for Emma Thompson. But I knew Emma. I'm friends with her, and she's very supportive and encouraging. But the professional boundary is quite important to me. You don't just run up to people of Emma's stature and shout, 'I've had an idea.'"  

"It was Debbie who said it would be odd not to send [the script] to her. She thought I should at least give her the chance to say no. Emma came back very quick and very strong and just said, 'We're going to do this.' At that point, I was sort of paralyzed with amazement and just sat there reading the email over and over again."  

**Creating Leo**  

With Thompson on board, the next obvious challenge was finding a young actor who could go toe to toe with the two-time Academy Award winner. This led them to newcomer Daryl McCormack. "I've always been interested in older eggs," said Brand. "I love hip-hop music. I love the creation of a persona in front of the person. I think my experience as a stand-up comedian — knowing that sometimes you have to go on stage when everything in your life is falling apart and still make everybody laugh, because that's what they're paying you to do — inspired the creation of Leo Grande."  

"When you're a touring comedian, you can show up and present yourself very differently to a different group of strangers. Some people find that very intoxicating. You just sort of be your best self, be your best version, be the most professional. I knew Leo should be very, very good at his job. That's the point initially. He has quite a particular talent for it."  

"But I think there's these little points where the conversations [between Nancy and Leo] turn, and there are opportunities for things to go a bit deeper. They're both talking each other, and themselves, by surprise. Leo develops more over [the course of the film]. You start to see more underneath, as the character relaxes, even when he's still being professional. I think that's a testament to Daryl's talent."  

Hyde went further: "The opening bit, where Leo's on the street, we added that in," she explained. "It's a reminder that he comes from somewhere. He's not just there to service Nancy in terms of the story. He has a life that we might not get access to, because of the formal constraints of the project and because he's doing his job. I wanted to draw a little bit of attention to that.  

"There is an amazing documentary theorist, Trinh T. Minh-ha. She talks about that we should always point outside the frame, that you shouldn't try and put everything in the frame. To me, that's what is important for a character like Leo. There's more going on. There's more under the surface. He has to do that beautiful thing where he's performing a role, but he's also present and honest and real."  

"That was fun for Daryl, I think," Hyde said with a smile. "Like when Leo is performing for Nancy, and his anxiety for whatever kind of sneak through. When he cannot shut his mouth and has to call Nancy out on something, and that turns out to be a good thing in their relationship. All of that made it even more important that Leo had a life outside the hotel room."  

**What audiences might take from the film**  

With the film hitting Hulu, even though the picture was a success at the Sundance Film Festival back in January, Brand is excited about the potential of so many eyes seeing it in such a big way. "I think we're all really proud of it," she happily proclaimed. "I hope that people find it funny. I hope they find it honest and moving, and maybe [it] sparks some sort of conversation that they want to have.  

"But if it doesn't, that's fine. If people want to just enjoy it as a comedy about two interesting people in an interesting situation, that's fine with me, too. Everything I've ever done, there's always been people who like it, and [people who don't like it]. I don't mind any of that. I'm just enjoying being part of the storytelling community."  

Hyde echoed many of those same sentiments. "I have loads of ideas about the movie and things that I think are important," the director admitted. "Those include the idea of pleasure and that it's something worth pursuing. Certainly there are these ideas about our body as things that we are in, that they're our home to maintain. These are really important things for me.  

"But in all honesty, I just like it when people start talking afterward. They're going to have different reactions. I want people to be able to speak frankly about how we treat each other and how we treat ourselves, about sex and intimacy. I hope people can remember that they don't have to be put into these boxes or accept these boxes all the time. They can find out what they like and who they like, and it doesn't have to be part of a predominated set of rules for their lives.  

Good Luck to You, Leo Grande is now streaming on Hulu.
National news highlights

Fox Sports censors Jeopardy! champ with NASCAR driver
NBC News reported on June 13 that Fox Sports didn’t air “Jeopardy!” champion Amy Schneider throwing a first pitch at a San Francisco baseball game, and instead showed footage from an hour earlier of NASCAR driver Kurt Busch doing the same.

Schneider is famously Jeopardy’s greatest woman contestant, having won 40 consecutive contests in a row. She is also the first Trans woman to qualify for the show’s Tournament of Champions, making Fox’s unexplained reduction a controversial one.

“I wanted to make a correction from what I watched yesterday on the Fox broadcast,” Giants broadcaster Dianne Knipper told NBC Sports Bay Area fans. “The broadcast implied that Kurt Busch threw out the first pitch yesterday which was not true. It was Amy Schneider from ‘Jeopardy’ fame who threw out the first pitch on Pride Day yesterday. So I just wanted to make sure she got her due.”

During the game, the Dodgers and Giants wore rainbow caps to celebrate Pride, and earlier, Schneider appeared as part of Pride Day at Oracle Park.

Trans Starbucks staff alleges threats to gender affirming care
Bloomberg reported on June 14 that Starbucks employees in Pennsylvania, Oklahoma, and Kansas allege that they were taken aside for one-on-one conversations in which management suggested that union-negotiated benefits wouldn’t include gender-affirming healthcare.

“I think the company realizes that we as Trans partners feel particularly vulnerable at this time,” Oklahoma Starbucks employee Neha Cremin told the press. “I think that in some cases they are willing to take advantage of that.”

Starbucks spokesperson Reggie Borges addressed the situation. “We are not threatening our partners with the loss of benefits if they join a union.”

The alleged threats surfaced amidst victories for Starbucks unionizers in over 70 stores nationwide, including right here in Seattle.
ORDER
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Biden’s administration listed “safeguarding healthcare and programs designed to prevent youth suicide” as one of the ways the order would address the issue, as well as cutting federal funding of conversion practices and launching a new initiative to protect foster youth, improve access to federal programs, and prevent homelessness.

The executive order comes as a response to over 320 anti-LGBTQ+ bills passed in state governments nationwide over the past year.

“We’re in a battle for the soul of the nation,” the president said to a group of LGBTQ activists and Democratic lawmakers. “And when I look around this room here and all of you here today, it’s a battle I know we will win.”

“All of you in this room know better than anyone else that these attacks are real and consequential for real families,” he said before signing the order. He pointed to Florida’s “Don’t Say Gay” bill and the arrest of 31 Patriot Front members near Idaho’s Coeur d’Alene Pride as examples.

Biden also called on Congress to pass the Equality Act, which would amend existing civil rights laws to explicitly include sexual orientation and gender identity as protected characteristics.

“My message to all the young people: Just be you,” said Biden. “I want you to know that, as your president, all of us on this stage have your back.”

The bill will tap into funding already allocated to federal agencies and will require no new funding to accomplish its goals.

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The 31 suspects are charged with conspiracy to riot at Coeur d’Alene Pride.

“I think some of us were a bit surprised by not only the level of preparation that we saw but the equipment that was carried and worn by those individuals, along with the large amount of equipment that was left in the van when the stop happened,” Lee White, Coeur d’Alene’s police chief, said at a June 23 press conference.

“At that level of preparation is not something you see every day.”

Among those arrested was Thomas Ryan Rousseau, the leader of the Patriot Front. Although only 23, Rousseau is a veteran white nationalist organizer. As editor of his high school newspaper, Rousseau was known for running racist and nationalist stories and cartoons.

He later joined Vanguard America, one of the far-right groups that organized the 2017 Unite the Right rally in Charlottesville, Virginia. James Alex Fields, convicted of the murder of Heather Heyer at that rally, was also a member of Vanguard America.

In the aftermath of the rally, Vanguard America fell apart due to internal infighting. Rousseau reportedly seized control of the group’s Discord server and social media accounts, and used those to create the Patriot Front, of which he is the undisputed leader.

According to the Salt Lake Tribune, the Dallas-based organization has hundreds of members nationwide. Jeff Tischhauer, a senior research analyst at the Southern Poverty Law Center, told the Salt Lake Tribune that the group tries to attract hatred nationwide. Compared to other states, Tischhauer said, the Texas chapter is “the most active.”

According to the Salt Lake Tribune, the group also has active adherents in Utah and uses the desert near Salt Lake City for tactical training exercises.

“They espouse racism, antisemitism, and intolerance under the guise of patriotism and preserving the ethnic and cultural origins of European ancestors,” Stacy Cushing, the deputy regional director of Anti-Defamation League’s Texas/Oklahoma branch, said about the Patriot Front.

“Their goal is to reclaim America as a white nation. They are white supremacists with neo-Nazi roots.”

Photo by Gage Skidmore

Last year, nearly 5,000 racist, antisemitic, and other hateful messages were identified across the country, with the Patriot Front responsible for more than 82% of incidents nationally, according to the Anti-Defamation League.

Sophie Bjork-James, an assistant professor in anthropology at Vanderbilt University, said her research into the white nationalist movement and its associated hate crimes has led her to see a connection with anti-LGBTQ violence.

“There is a very clear relationship between normalizing this hateful content and having extremist groups try to mobilize around that in hateful actions,” she said. “We can see a direct relationship between the spectrum of anti-LGBT rhetoric from statehouses into these extremist groups.”
Canada to freeze handgun ownership

by Lindsey Anderson
SGN Contributing Writer

In the wake of another mass shooting in the United States, the all-too-familiar gun control debates have begun. It's the same debate that has followed nearly every mass shooting in the last two decades: liberals call for stricter gun laws, and conservatives counter with their reasons for protecting the freedom of gun ownership, usually backed by the strength of the NRA.

This month, however, a new player entered the ring. Canadian Prime Minister Justin Trudeau announced a proposed bill to the media on February 20th that would strengthen the country's already strict gun control laws.

"We're introducing legislation to implement a national freeze on handgun ownership," Trudeau announced in a press conference on February 20th. "This means that it will no longer be possible to buy, sell, transfer, or import handguns anywhere in Canada. In other words, we're capping the market on handguns," he explained.

While the law has only been proposed so far, politicians predict it will pass through the House of Commons. The Canadian government does not have the same polarization the US is familiar with. It has more of a three-party political system.

The Liberal Party supports the bill, while the Conservative Party opposes it. It may not sound too far off from the American political system, but in 1996 the New Democratic Party was established. Experts are predicting a swift passage of the bill with the latter party's help.

What will the law do?

The new proposed law will put a national freeze on the sale and import of all firearms. The law will also place a national cap on the number of guns allowed in the country. Once the law goes into effect, buying, selling, transferring, or importing handguns will be illegal in Canada.

The new legislation will also increase fines for those convicted of weapons violations. Any person, anywhere in the country, charged with possession of an illegal weapon will face extensive fines and criminal penalties. The law will also allow law enforcement to go after illegal gun-smugglers.

Opposition from gun owners

"It is a total ban in everything but the name," said Canadian gun law expert Solomon Friedman. "It seems to me like gun control made by Twitter. In the wake of an awful and unacceptable tragedy in the United States — which of course has its own gun culture, has its issues concerning violence that simply do not exist in Canada — we have some hollow legislation."

Despite complaints from Canadian gun owners who feel the new legislation is wrong, and will not do anything to prevent mass shootings, it is clear that Trudeau is trying to do something. The law is making it harder to buy a gun.

Chris Evans said of the aversion to LGBTQ issues, "we're not going to do anything, especially something as important as the loving and inspirational relationship that shows Buzz's character, so that's not getting cut.

There is a lot of good here. Canadians support this legislation, because we've been listening to them and we will continue to work with them to pass this law this year."

Trudeau echoed Mendicino in his press conference, saying, "Those who are in the market are already doing their due diligence and are not sending the wrong message."

Canada's existing gun control laws

Canada's existing gun laws are already some of the strictest in the world. In 2020 the country banned nearly 1,500 models of assault weapons, including the AR-15, after a mass shooting in Portapique, Nova Scotia, left 22 dead. The weapon used in the shooting was illegally obtained by smugglers from the United States.

Until the new laws are officially passed, the Federal government will monitor all new handguns purchased. Because the freeze will not go into effect until the legislation can be passed through Parliament, some Canadians expect to see an increase in legal gun sales and licensing in the coming weeks, as people rush to buy their own guns.

Police and gun owners alike agree that the new law is much needed. Police say that guns are often diverted to illegal channels, and that the new law will help to keep guns out of the hands of those who should not have them.

As a government, as a society, we have a responsibility to act to prevent more tragedies. Canadians certainly don't need assault-style weapons that were designed to kill the largest number of people in the shortest amount of time. This law is a huge step in the right direction.

"And another thing that Bill C21 does is it introduces red-flag protocols that allow anyone to go to a court to say either the person is a danger or they suspect the license to precisely protect that, but additionally with the protection of the person's identity too."

Rebel Wilson comes out...

columnist says too soon

NHPC News reported on June 13 that the Sydney Morning Herald removed a column about Rebel Wilson, after complaints that he attempted to "out" the Sydney Morning Herald reporter that she was dating a woman.

Jewish columnist Andrew Horney wrote that Wilson had "opted to gazump the story" — meaning she swindled it — by announcing the news on her Instagram profile a few days before the column's publication, which Horney said was a "big mistake" and "underwhelming."

Herald editor Evan Shields defended the column in a note to readers, but the column was replaced with an apology just a day later, with the headline, "I made mistakes over Rebel Wilson, and I will learn from them."

Wilson's Instagram post revealed that she is dating Ramona Agruma, an Los Angeles-based entrepreneur and brand ambassador. The post declared that she may have found her own "Disney Princess."

On the incident with the Herald, Wilson replied to a journalist on Twitter, "Thanks for your comments, it was a very hard situation but trying to handle it with grace."

International news highlights

by Daniel Lindsay
SGN Contributing Writer

Disney will not cut LGBTQ content, despite pressures

Reuters reported on June 13 that Disney Pixar's new film Lightyear will not show up in 14 countries in the Middle East and Asian countries, due to various laws against sexuality and same-sex couples. The countries in question include the United Arab Emirates, Saudi Arabia, Egypt, Indonesia, and Lebanon.

The film is also unlikely to appear in China, the world's largest movie market, since the studio waited to release the film until after authorities in China asked for them.

"Lightyear" is the prequel to Pixar's famous "Toy Story," and it will star Chris Evans as Captain America's famous space ranger Buzz Lightyear. The gay couple causing the stir is Buzz's close friend, a female space ranger who marries a woman.
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