

PLACES YOU ARE WELCOME

ISSUE#3: ANALOGUE EXPRESSIONS

Interviews
with

Kaitlyn Stewart, Anisha Reindorf,
JoAnne Pearce, Roxanne Mailloux

All money raised through
PYAW is donated to
Alberta's Trans
Affirming Legal Fund

2025
SEC. ROW 02 10
FREE ADMISSION FOR DYKES,
TRANNNIES, FAGS, AND PUNKS



LAND BACK

This project is created on Treaty 6 territory. This land is a traditional meeting place for Indigenous peoples across Turtle Island, a legacy which carries on to today. It must be understood that truly radical hospitality on stolen land is not possible until that land is returned from the machinery of colonialism. All liberation is connected, we cannot be free until we are all free.

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Staying Stupid

Calliope Draper

Analogue Expressions is an issue which is built around the things that exist as a translation point between two different mediums or concepts. Throughout this issue you will find interviews with individuals creating truly unique experiences and expressions situated at these intersections. A common thread for all of these stories is a decision to create something new that they wanted to see in the world. Each person came at these new endeavors under different levels of familiarity and have since created a flourishing community. Having had the pleasure to talk to our wonderful contributors in the lead up to my global travels through the World's 50 Best Bar's Roku Scholarship, and to revisit these interviews for revisions during my travels; a concept not explicitly mentioned but still essential to these stories made itself clear. The courage to be stupid. I mean this not in a derogatory sense nor to demean the wonderful minds which have contributed to this issue. I mean it instead as the courage to learn, to take a risk on something you may not yet fully understand the results of.

This moment in time we are surrounded by "smart" solutions, ones which aim to resolve all of our problems before we're even

confronted with the luxury of experiencing them. The advent of AI tools seek to remove all of the work behind the act of creating, so that we are left with only the idea and the finished product, devoid of the work which imbues the product with its meaning. We live in a time that in everything we do we are told that someone or something else would solve the pesky problem of creation and upkeep for us. Based on this current trajectory, sometimes I feel like learning itself is soon going to be obsolete. To be bad at something will be an act of the past and we will no longer have to worry ourselves with the hassle of honing our skills.

In spite of this cultural shift, the individuals in this issue pushed forward to hone a craft and to create something new. Each project carries unique philosophies that have made their communities all the better for their existence. In the spirit of staying stupid, on my scholarship travels, I have brought along a sketchbook which I have slowly been filling with downright awful art. Despite my love of art in all forms, I have a complete lack of skill in the world of pen and paper drawing. This challenge to capture my travels through a medium in which I am extraordinarily limited in ability has been a joyfully frustrating and quite often

moderately embarrassing experience. The courage to be stupid has been a deeply rewarding philosophy while on my travels and has allowed me to learn so much more than if I had attempted to be smart.

Since this issue has primarily been edited whilst on the road, I have struggled with the best way in which to fill our cocktail section as I am without means to recreate and have the drinks photographed as would be typical. Rather than to leave them without photographs, and to protect our bartenders from my amateur draftswomanship, I have instead put into that section a selection of poor quality drawings from my travels alongside some of my favorite cocktails which I encountered or brought with me on my travels.

As always, I hope that each of you reading understands the gratitude I have for you all for being willing to engage with this project of passion. PYAW from its beginning has been a project that has only been possible with this community and has stemmed from the ever risky yet endlessly important act of trusting oneself to be stupid.

With Love,
Calliope Draper

WORLD CLASS

Like·a·ble cocktails

Like-A-Ble, In person and online

Kaitlyn Stewart

I first started traveling for bartending before my social media era. It was through World Class; and it was amazing. Now I've been doing the social media thing for a few years and have built out a decent audience, it's funny because I get recognized more as Like-A-Ble Cocktails not as the World Class 2017 Global Winner. To see the shift between being recognized as Kaitlyn the bartender, to Kaitlyn the online personality, has definitely been an adjustment. Doing pop-ups and events out in public only strengthens that. It's really fun because not everybody who's in this creative online space has the opportunity to do in-person stuff. Not all of them have been bartenders before; they're self-taught home bartenders and they're amazing at what they do, but they're not as comfortable getting behind a bar space. It's a very different skill set in each side of it; you get behind a bar and the event pops off and it's go, go, go. If you don't have experience with that type of chaos and energy, it can be very overwhelming. So I think when people come to a pop-up and they see me behind the bar, they can be confused. I'm usually living in their phone and not in real life; but I'm a real person too. I actually do this for a living. Pop-ups definitely strengthened the online relationship with the viewer too, you become a little bit more accessible online; you become this trusted familiar face for them and they feel like they know you.

I've been bartending for 20 years, and I think about where I first started to where I am now versus, you know, when I first started social media to where I am now too, it's constantly evolving and changing. Bartenders out there now are being pushed to start posting online; because that's where our target audience is. Not all of our consumers and guests know about 50 Best lists or know about all the awards and

prestigious things that our tiny little cocktail community knows about. It's social media bringing a lot of folks in, I'm scrolling through and I see someone mentioning that you offer amazing non-alcoholic cocktails, or that you're queer friendly; It's because it's been put out into the world and people find it.

Our cocktail community, especially when you get into the niche craft world, is actually really small. So you end up recognizing and seeing the same people over and over and over again. You always have that moment of seeing somebody else in the room that you recognize which is fantastic; It helps you feel like you're in a safer space. From the content creator perspective, walking into that space is foreign to them, but they see somebody like me behind the bar it can help them feel comfortable and like they fit in. There's always that misfit in us where sometimes you just feel like maybe your an impostor. But you just gotta put on a smile, go with it, and hope for the best. You gotta remember at the end of the day, we're all in hospitality. So even if you only know somebody from afar, if they work in the industry you're never gonna get truly disappointed by going up to them and saying, "Hey, I appreciate what you do for the community." We're used to talking to strangers, we're used to having awkward conversations and welcoming people in. So at least we have that all in common.

You have to wear many different hats when it comes to pop-ups. Sometimes it's really great to go in with a game plan. Maybe you're doing like a thematic menu for the evening where it's all about sustainability or it's all about like Queer icons and you've got to prepare those things. But I think what the online space has shifted for me is that people follow Like-A-Ble Cocktails because of what I personally bring to

it. So when they come to a pop-up they're not expecting to get out based on a theme. It's more, "Oh! I know her from TikTok, I'm gonna go to that pop-up and meet her. I've learned my lesson the hard way when I first started doing pop-ups, especially after winning World Class. I was doing these pop-ups all around the world and people were expecting these wild and crazy drinks from the 'world's best bartender.' The impostor syndrome would creep in and I'd think, what if they taste one of my drinks and they think "oh, this was supposed to be the best bartender in the world, this drink is average, I can make this at home."

I quickly realized doing these pop-ups that people don't necessarily come for the drinks, they come to be in the environment and to experience what I offer. I don't have a rotovap to work with, I don't have a bunch of crazy wild equipment in my home bar. So I know I'm not showing up to a pop-up trying to be Paradiso. I'm showing up to a pop-up to be myself and offer this warm, intentional hospitality and a crushable delicious drink. You are gonna impress some people and you're gonna leave some people unimpressed, but if you try to pander to absolutely everybody, then you're gonna drive yourself crazy.

What I love about the content space is that everybody has their own unique personality and vibe that they bring to socials. For me personally, from day one my videos have always been intentionally about teaching you to make what I'm making. So sometimes the recipes may seem rudimentary, but they'll come with the option of making it a little more exciting or a little more adventurous. Every once in a while I'll throw in something crazy that I don't think anybody's going to try; and

constantly people will surprise me and make it. I try not to underestimate the viewer, but at the same time I also wanna provide value and I want to provide information that people can take and explore further if they want. It really is about learning who your target audience is and what they want. If you do it only for yourself, then you end up pandering to your own ego. But if you know that you're doing it for other people you have to care for them. I'm not making these videos for seasoned professional bartenders. I'm making them for the people that are coming into our bars, so that they have a better appreciation of what we do on our end; they don't see behind the scenes work otherwise.

You see people out there complaining about the cost of cocktails these days. People saying 'why am I paying the same amount of money for a non-alcoholic drink as I'd pay for an alcoholic drink.' But when you roll back the curtain a little bit and explain how making a non-alcoholic drink is often more time consuming and more costly than a basic classic cocktail they start to understand. There are all these factors that people don't take into consideration; when people start to understand they go into a bar and open a menu and understand the costs. I think putting a little bit more power into the consumer's hand is only benefiting us as the people behind the bar because they get a better understanding of what we do. Sure, you can make this at home, but you don't always have the time and care and attention that we do. Somebody picked that glassware, somebody hand carved that ice, somebody put love and attention and effort into every aspect of your drink. So I think peeling back the curtain and showing people how much effort it actually takes is beneficial for everybody.

I do my filming typically when my partner isn't home because it just gets embarrassing hearing yourself talk out loud, over and over and over again. At the beginning, I tried to do a video every day, five days a week, Monday through Friday, every single day. I was good at it for a chunk of time. Then it got to the point where I was so burnt out from trying to stay creative, I was just exhausted. Even just doing my hair and makeup was hard. I wear a hat every day, but still having to put a face on

because I can't roll out of bed and just film a video; there's a lot of folks out there on the internet that love to pick you apart for that. As much as I wanna say, they're not gonna get me down; it can take its toll. So I've learned that it's okay to take breaks and it's okay to have those days where I'm not feeling it. You can tell when something is genuine that comes across your screen versus forced and just kind of labor intensive. At the beginning, I hated missing days, but now I'm like, 'nope, this is totally okay. Why am I stressing myself out for something that I like, genuinely love?' Because that will make me not love it.

There was a time during the summer where I was traveling a lot. I would like get so down to myself, I'd have like three days when I would come home and then in those three days I would try to jam pack things to get done. Now I've learned in those three days I need to spend time with my partner, take my dog for a walk, reset, maybe take a bath, put my mental and physical health before new content. For a lot of people who work in this industry, it's really hard sometimes to take that step back and put yourself first 'cause we're so used to putting everybody else first. It's hospitality, right? That mentality of the customer comes first.

When it comes to events like North America's 50 Best Bars, I'm at this weird crossroads between being a bartender first and foremost, but not having a regular mainstay that people can come and visit me. But I have this unique vantage point; I know most of the bartenders in Vancouver, I know most of the cocktail bartenders and amazing bars across Canada and even further across North America. I think it's a really unique position to be here for an event like this. To help host people or take people on bar crawls. I love that World Class is gonna be in Toronto and then I heard 50 Best was coming to Vancouver; I was ecstatic. Vancouver and Toronto, for as many similarities they have, have so many things that are so different. So I love that we have this opportunity to show the West coast, and Ontario. Canada is big and vast, it's a five hour flight between Vancouver and Toronto, so not everybody when they're in Toronto will necessarily get on a plane to Vancouver or Calgary or Halifax. Maybe they'll hop over to Montreal but it's expensive to fly within the

country. With World Class Globals this year, our focus is not just showing Toronto, but Canadian hospitality; Canada has such an amazing tight-knit cocktail community from coast to coast. So bringing in people from across Canada and bringing in bars or even singular bartenders to come and join and take in the experience. I think we're really lucky that we have that sense of community and we foster that really well, especially within the World-Class Canada team.

This will also be a big year for Canadian hospitality. When I won World Class back like 2017, people were surprised about Canada Winning. But at the same time, Evelyn Schick won Beefeater and Sabrina Dhaliwal won Belvedere; So we've had these big wins under our belt for so long. After we got that fourth Canadian global winner for World Class people kind of joke and they're like, oh, is Canada gonna win again? Yeah, we're gunning for it and this year you can also come see what the magic is all about.

Katlyn's forthcoming book is set to release for the end of September/early October. Be sure to keep your eyes peeled.

Follow her on Instagram or TikTok at @likeablecocktails to find helpful videos on all aspects of the world of cocktails.





Cannabuiness and Pleasure

Anisha Reindorf of Highku Productions



When my wife and I moved from Toronto to Edmonton it was kind of a culture shock for us. We were like 'where was the village?' And people were like 'what village?' And we realized we have to create our own. So, we've been on the hunt for about 10 years to build and find safe spaces in the city beyond just the one gay club we have. We were asking ourselves where all the Queer spaces not built on alcohol were? The Queer spaces where I can play a board game or a video game? I couldn't find that in Edmonton. So I thought let's combine cannabis and Queer culture, because, in Canada, we wouldn't have legalization without Queer folks. It was the AIDS epidemic that led us to medical exemptions and legalization. It's also important to bring back the value to more than just getting high, and to recognize the value of cannabis in a religious or medical light.

[Highku Productions] started doing events in 2018. They were Queer focused, art focused, cannabis focused. They weren't necessarily in your face about it, but were framed as cannabis events where everyone is welcome. Queer spaces with cannabis in mind. Cannabis has been my jam through and through. For us it was all about creating a safe community space where you don't need alcohol.

Then we rolled out CannaDrag, which is where the fun came in.

We've had some trial and error with setting the structure for CannaDrag. I had never hosted a drag show. I didn't know how difficult it would be to work with these performers who can be very much "queens and kings" just like any artist they can be very demanding, but with classic ones you can tell them what to do more, and with drag it's more of them telling you what to do. It was interesting to find that balance and work with the individuals. It can sometimes be drama filled—very much like Untucked from Drag Race, especially in the backroom. Trial and error was the only way to learn for something like this because there weren't too many existing models so I had no idea what I was getting into. Every single speech I've planned has not gone according to plan. I'm a virgo, so everything is scheduled and written in advance. Every other event goes really well, but at CannaDrag you're talking to 80+ high people and it never pans out how you thought it would, but we keep trying a year and a half later.

The vibe at CannaDrag is unique because after the break you can tell the

energy is lower and slower. Everyone is high. Hosts will make jokes that will go over everyone's head, or people will be a bit sensitive because feelings are heightened. I've learned that all the slower acts have to be in the first act while the crowd's energy is still there, so you can pump up the energy for the second half, when people are getting in their heads.

It's been really well received, you never know what the stigma will be with cannabis so it was always a risk. There are a lot of California sober people here, especially in the drag community. As we saw in the last season of Canada's Drag Race, being drugged in the community through liquor is more common than any of us would like to admit. We want people to be able to go to our events and be in a safe space without feeling pressured to smoke. There is indoor consumption at CannaDrag, so people get high or second hand high. We have performers that don't smoke, so we have things in place to help balance that for the performers. Those who don't consume go first so they are comfortable and can carry out their number and make sure they feel okay. CannaDrag is a completely alcohol-free zone in an alcohol-free building. We do have liquor sponsors for the event, but they

sponsor our performers with non-alcoholic beverages exclusively. Having that separation and making sure that there is a completely liquor free zone is really important; you don't need liquor to have an experience. We have budtenders that can craft you bespoke THC beverages. I've spent some time in the industry and I craft all the drinks myself so that you still enjoy a high quality cocktail but it's infused with cannabis or CBD.

Initially it was difficult to find our footing with CannaDrag; when we began doing explicitly Queer events and working with the drag community not everyone accepted it. We hosted the first ever drag show with the Leduc Pride Society last year. When their pride society reached out and asked for help I said an enthusiastic yes. I got Hansen Distillery to sponsor the entire event, and we held it in a dance studio. It got so much hate on Facebook, the local Leduc coffee shop ran amuck online and said they want to shut us down and don't want Queers in their city. They said that we were pedophiles. It was mind blowing to see the support their posts got; I didn't expect it but I know I should have. We thought that we would be faced with picketers so we had to get private security to make sure the performers got in safety. Everything went okay for the event, but afterwards the studio space was shut down. The community of Leduc resoundingly said that they didn't want spaces that would work with Queer artists in their community. They didn't want kids to be at the studio, which is heartbreaking since it was the only safe space in town for these kids. We've since been working with city officials to figure out

how we can help this space reopen because they didn't deserve this backlash. It's always an uphill battle, especially with the smaller cities, but I will keep fighting the good fight because it's damaging to communities to not have safe Queer spaces.

As much as I don't want to get political, being Queer, being BIPOC, and smoking weed are all very much political things. With Highku, I wanted to show that cannabis is not just about getting high, it's about all of these other elements. We've been raising money for different youth shelters through our work. We've been able to open more doors, not just for ourselves, but for folks in Edmonton. I've always just wanted to boost everyone up; It's all about raising the community together. I keep going through sheer tenacity. Sometimes I think "I'm already a black woman, and I don't want to be fighting my entire life, why does it have to be me?" My wife and my mom tell me to keep fighting the battle. I have their voices in my ear saying that someone needs to do better, and maybe I can do better for the things I'm capable of. It's the community that keeps me going. I really wasn't sure how we were going to do it this year. My wife had a double stroke in November. It's been a rough go ahead and I wanted to quit it all. I was done. Then so many people reached out asking 'how can I help? How are we doing it? What can I do? We need this!' That's the main message all around—that we need this. I just keep pushing for the community and the greater good. It's damaging if we don't have these safe spaces for everyone. It doesn't hurt one individual, it hurts us as a society, a community, a province, as a whole. Especially now with

everything happening politically. We gotta do what we gotta do and fight for our rights.

HighKu was originally about my wife and I not finding a safe space in our community. We often think that Queer spaces are inherently safe, but that's not always the case. I don't necessarily feel safe at the gay bar on a Thursday night. Moving out here and seeing the division and lack of safe BIPOC, Queer spaces, it was really important to create one ourselves here. When we first moved to Edmonton, we would go to BC every weekend for some normalcy. A few years down the line now, and I think we have succeeded in creating that space that we wanted to see.

HighKu Productions is an Edmonton Based organization advocating to break the stigma around cannabis, and to show the world that you don't need to get high to enjoy this plant and the community it brings.

Their event, CannaDrag, was recently awarded the accolade of "Best Recurring Drag Show" through Edmonton's drag award organization "The Stilettos"



Painting With Light

Roxanne Mailou, Folly Arts Media

I started food and beverage photography during Covid. I had studied photography and wanted to be an artist but there was no real work for me in that so I stopped for a while and suddenly Covid hit. For the first three months of the pandemic, Daphne and I were in our apartment with nothing to do like everybody else. So she said "Hey, do you think we could take some pictures of my cocktails? That could give us something to do." I was still taking pictures occasionally for fun so I thought why not and grabbed my camera. We took a few pictures and it was a lot of fun.

That's when the idea for Cocktail Roads came to us. We built it up and started traveling around the country. I took photos for a lot of people all around the country, 135 people. It was when we came back to Montreal in 2021 that someone I met through Cocktail Roads, Jean-Max Giguere from 132 Bar Vintage, reached out to me and he was like, "Hey, we are looking for a photographer for my bar. Would you be interested in that kind of gig?" It started with him, and I have been doing it full-time since because of how fast it snowballed.

What Cocktail Roads did most is give me practice and a massive circle of connections, because we spent at least four or five hours with everyone we featured talking about all their life, all their goals, all their dreams, taking portraits, making videos. It really helped me having this massive network of people. Canada is such

a big country, from coast to coast and having connections from Halifax to Vancouver, except in Manitoba (because Manitoba was shut down at the time). It helped me create a massive network and practice; because a lot of people think cocktail photography is easy, but it's a hard branch of photography. Glasses tend to cause problems when taking photos so you really have to know what you do for it to look good and beautiful.

When it comes to setting up a shoot, the first thing on my list is to do my homework. If a new client contacts me, I'm gonna check their social media, see what kind of vibe they're going for already. Then it's time to validate what kind of mood and image they want. My priority is for them to be happy. Their social media page isn't mine, it's theirs. So I want to showcase exactly what they are, what they want, and what they want to showcase. So I'm checking the what they already have, double check if it's the mood they want to keep or not, and build on that.

I want the mood to be the best for everybody. When I arrive, I always have 5 or 10 minutes of setting up and I try to have a quick fun conversation not related to the shoot, it's the perfect time to just make everybody at ease. I'm not shy, but I am an introverted person, and looking at Daphne, who is like the most extroverted person in the world, interact with everyone gave me some clues on how to connect with people and make them feel beautiful,

make them feel seen, make them feel at ease. When they feel this way the photos always turn out better.

When I arrive at a bar, one of the very first things I do, even without saying it, is to start looking at every single spot that's gonna look good. The way I see it, you don't want to just show the cocktails, you wanna show the cocktails in the place where they are served. It's a double, it showcases your bar, it showcases your cocktails, it showcases the mood, it showcases what to expect, and gives you an idea of the full experience. Have you ever stopped in front of a picture of a drink in front of a plain background saying, 'I wanna go to this place?' But if you put the same cocktail and showcase the personality of the place or the mood, you stop and it's like, 'oh, this place looks so very super rad, let's go.'

My two biggest skills in life are driving long distances, and looking at things. That's what I know how to do, I don't talk a lot, I listen, and I look. I was a theater director when I was in my early twenties; so observing and looking at how to create, and recreate the mood in the photos is just something that comes naturally to me. But it comes naturally, with a lot of practice.

You always sit with the client before to say, 'what is the mood of your bar?' What do you want people to feel about your bar through your photos? If I go to your bar, is it a party place? Okay, let's build some

energy and let's move things around. Oh, is it like a high-end fancy cocktail bar? Okay, let's have those deep black shadows and a beautiful enlightened cocktail that creates mystery. A shoot I did recently was really fun because she wanted it to be super flashy with a lot of colors and a lot of light. But the bar isn't finished so right now everything is gray. I did some research, I brought in some external lights with colors. I planned the shoot, and the pictures are really beautiful, colorful and flashy.

When it comes to events and competitions, there's no retake. If you miss the second, it's gone. You can't do anything about it anymore. I'm really lucky that I know my camera really, really well, so I can adjust at the spur of the moment really quickly. Versatility is important when you do events; you need the capacity to adjust really fast to any change. There's always things changing at every second, sometimes you need to expose for high shadow and then you need to expose for massive light, and you have one second to adjust your camera. If you don't know what to do you're gonna fail. Which is why it's essential to be really clear about what you need, because everybody's overwhelmed. Everybody's busy, the organizers are busy, the people participating are busy and stressed. So you need to have a strong confidence in yourself, because you have needs as photographer and you have to be able to communicate with the organizers and the participants. The participants need you to be assertive, but polite and lovely. People react to that and they help you make your job going better. So you need to be assertive but still kind. If you're rude, you suck; and if you're meek and quiet, it's not gonna work because you need the collaboration from others.

I've found a good balance for myself. I'm assertive enough that I'm gonna get the help I need to make the best results. I know my camera from every angle in the world, so I can adjust super fast, and since I usually know most of the competitors, they tend to be more comfortable being in front of me than a stranger. That's the beauty of having such a tight community. I try to be part of everything. If there's music, you're gonna see me dance around stupidly. I dance like a dog missing three legs, but I love doing it and it makes people smile. You want people to smile and look happy; your work is going to represent a brand. You don't want to represent a brand with people looking unhappy and having a bad time. When I go to events just for the fun of it and I see the photographer going around with their face all sad. I'm like, 'what the fuck are you doing?' I always check a little bit behind the screen and usually I'm like, 'Nope, that's not gonna look good'.

I think it's important to not be the classic photographer that takes themselves way too seriously. Our job is complicated, but at the end of the day, we're creating an image. Have fun and enjoy it. You're paid to take pictures of people having a party, enjoy yourself and have a moment and be there. Everybody's going to feel more comfortable with you and the pictures are gonna be better. I really love what I do. I think it's important, but it's not serious. It's not like humanity won't survive if I'm gone and photographers are gone.

I always overshoot because people will make weird faces when they compete. The most beautiful people in the world will look weird in the competition. If I need 10 pictures, I'm gonna do 50 because I'm gonna be able to narrow it down. It's a bit more work, but I want everybody to be happy. I care, I care a lot about this. Yeah,

BEER IS

okay, it's gonna take me half an hour or an hour more of anything. Who fucking cares? Like, everybody's gonna be more happy and I'm gonna be happy. When I took the photos for World Class Canada two years ago, it was one of the best gigs I ever had. It was like 16 hours a day non-stop moving. When it finished three days later, I was sad because I wanted more.

Photography is painting with light. I really like a dark moody style, the ones with a lot of shadow. There's a guy named Lateef, he's a London based photographer for all the biggest bars in London. He's a big inspiration for me. The cocktail is always so perfectly highlighted and so beautiful, but there's a lot of mystery and stuff happening, it gives a very magical vibe, and I'm a witch, so if you have a magic vibe in the photos, I'm hooked.

This has been a crazy wild dream for me of being national at this job. It's so hard to even to have work just in your own city; and I'm like, let's go big and try to have work in all around the country. I grew up dirt poor, and like having this kind of dream just never happens where I'm from. You just shut the fuck up and you... you stay poor all your life. But I have this wild dream that's just the right amount of stupid, and I am trying to make it happen. It's still in the process of building up but maybe in five years I could be international. It's so important to me to not gate keep the photography business. When newbies or rising photographers ask questions, I answer. I want to get a coffee with you and explain as much as I can (business, photography skills, etc.) It's important to raise each other instead of being at each other's throats.

Don't cry over



Mocktails

JoAnne Pearce, MockUp Mocktails

Opening a mocktail bar was a completely surprising outcome for me. I was a fairly steady drinker from my late teens all the way through my late thirties. I always knew that it would be something I'd have to deal with. But it's the sort of thing you keep putting to the back burner until you can't anymore. During the pandemic, a lot of us were drinking too much; it was easy, and it felt like we had permission to over consume given the state of things. I had tried a couple sober challenges and they didn't really work for me in the way that... I cheated on them. But one day, I woke up a little bit hungover, because the night before I had felt the need to do acapella karaoke to a Bjork song for people I'd just met for the first time over Zoom. I remember turning to my partner Andrew Paul, who's also a partner of Spilt Zero Proof, and told him that I was done and that I didn't wanna feel that way anymore. As somebody who is highly driven by anxiety, it just wasn't productive; all this creative energy that I have was going into worrying about what people were thinking about me and worrying if they could smell the hangover. So I started to put that energy to work creating mocktails instead.

That wasn't an intentional career path decision, it was more so an "I need to do something with my hands" decision. At the time, I didn't really know what a mocktail was supposed to be; I don't think

many of us did. I also didn't come from a professional bartending place. I had a white collar job doing marketing and communications. I just got really into creating weird flavor profiles and boiling everything that I could; because syrups were the only way that I knew how to extract flavor at the time. I ended up self-publishing some recipe books and releasing those, and it was mostly my friends buying them at first to support me. Through that venture, things kind of opened up and we got press coverage and ended up partnering with Token Bitters for a foray into the world of manufacturing, where we released four bottled mocktail products that feature locally grown fruit. When it comes down to it though, manufacturing is mainly science and legislation and a lot of repetition. I crave new stimulation constantly, so my brain is always thinking about something new. Because of that, the manufacturing side of things wasn't really for me.

A bar was perfect for all of that though. It got stuck in my head and I couldn't stop thinking about it. It was important to me to be the first mocktail bar to open in Alberta. Andrew and I both have backgrounds in marketing, so the media value of being the first was clear. But even more importantly, we wanted to help set the tone. I really wanted to steer it away from this kind of wellness centered/diet

culture approach and have it be more of a flavor-based experience. A bar is also a direct, tangible tool for community building.

The two questions we get asked constantly are, 'when did you open?', and 'how are you doing?' Folks ask the second question with a tone of concern. It's the way you talk to somebody who's maybe just undergone something tragic. They don't mean for it to be a little patronizing, but it can be. Folks are genuinely curious, but I think people assume that this venture could be before its time and that it's a big risk because the audience isn't there yet. They're not entirely wrong to think so; it is a big risk. When it came to financing with the bank there was very little data to make a case for the bar's success. In 2023, when I was looking up the data, all that was coming up was soft drinks. So it was a bald-faced risk and not everybody is willing to take those. If you're couched in the comfort of an existing bar or liquor store structure, where you can offer both leaded and unleaded offerings, it's a bit easier.

Opening a bar as somebody who doesn't come from the bar scene has been incredibly humbling. I've had to learn how to be okay with not knowing a lot of terminology, or technique; and looking dumb as I try to learn. I'm at peace with that because I also think that what we have here is a new, and important, perspective

on the industry. I think by not knowing how things are supposed to be, you can also be more creative. You start to navigate cliches and decide which ones you want to keep and which ones don't serve your values. One of the advantages of not coming from a professional bartending background is not being beholden to traditional cocktail culture. It's not an obsession of mine to make the perfect Negroni. There are people who smell our zero proof spirits and they immediately go, 'no, no, don't want that; that's triggering.' I went to a local restaurant here in Edmonton and they served me a drink that was so close to the real thing, (I learned later that they had sent it through a rotary evaporator to distill away the alcohol). I didn't send it back, but I asked our waiter to confirm there wasn't alcohol in it, and he just took the drink away, assuming that I didn't have the palate for it, or couldn't understand it. He didn't explain their dealcoholization process when I first asked, or know how to have that more nuanced conversation to put me at ease. Being served alcohol by accident is a real fear that sober people carry around, and for good reason, because it happens a lot. So, what was arguably one of the best non-alc cocktails I've ever tried, was also one of the worst customer experiences I've ever had. And, maybe most tragically, I never got my drink back. Bartenders need to understand that this is new territory, and that landing too close to 'the real thing' is not always a win. You have not always succeeded in serving that client where they need to be met. They might still want the experience and the vibe and the complexity and the presentation, all of that. But they're not looking for an alcohol-adjacent drink. Or maybe they do want a Negroni, but you need to be able to speak to your process.

When we started all of this, I was pretty clear in my messaging that we didn't want to be always be reaching for that event horizon. That having a menu full of drinks that are modeled after classic knowable cocktails is the surest way to disappoint, or trigger

people. Particularly for people who are newer to mocktails, they'll often end up tasting the drink for what it isn't instead of what it is. It becomes a tasting experience of absence. Still, I wanted the environment to be familiar. Setting up the bar to feel like a bar was essential for me. I didn't want it to feel like a yoga studio or a cafe or juice bar, because if there's anybody who knows what a bar should feel like, it's a former drinker. I used to love a good dive bar, but dive bars when you're sober are often kind of scary. People are unpredictable and you can see the sad bits more clearly. When you're buzzed on budget beer, and ordering rounds of shitty high balls, it somehow was more charming. So I wanted to find a way to offer a genuine bar environment to people, which is why we spent half our building budget on neon signs, but in a gentler, more approachable way.

Learning who our clientele is has been really interesting. We have a lot of people come in who are a bit uncomfortable and you can tell because they're looking around silently and they're staring at everything that we're doing. But I've come to realize it's because they're feeling shy and this is maybe the first time they've been in a bar, or their first time back in one for a long time. So they are fascinated with what they're seeing. I obviously knew that we'd be attracting more than just folks struggling with addiction, though obviously that is a major part of our customer base. I wasn't exactly sure who to expect our guests to be at first and by whom we would be embraced. So the intersectionality has been the coolest part hands down. That has been really, really fun to see. We have a strong Muslim demographic, a lot of folks from the Queer community, a lot of neurodivergent folks and it's something I'm incredibly grateful for because the bar is better off for it and it's so much richer. The people who come in, I'm like,

I would be friends with you.

My worry for a while was that there would be a little bit of pushback from the traditional hospitality world. Nobody likes a finger wagged in their face; I've tried very hard to avoid being a part of that noise. I'm not a doctor, nobody needs me to finger wag at them. Nobody needs me to tell them the alcohol's bad for them. If anything, I have empathy for drinkers right now because the messaging around alcohol consumption has gotten so much more serious so quickly. That empathy extends to producers of traditional alcohol products too, as they struggle to recover diminishing market share. What we really need is better non-alc options across the board, for drinkers and non-drinkers alike, and that's the conversation I'm interested in being a part of right now.

I feel a little protective of the naivete that I came into this venture with. A fresh perspective doesn't last forever, and I want to preserve ours for as long as possible. Not knowing better is where a lot of good stuff comes from. Andrew and I just follow what's interesting to us. That is pretty much what drives everything that we do. Andrew has a habit of listening to hours and hours and hours of food podcasts while he's cooking. He got into the back catalog of Dave Arnold's podcast recently and listened obsessively to pretty much every episode, which is what got him into making Amari from scratch. Now we're making Amari out of everything we can get our hands on. We keep finding these new worlds of technique, adding new tools to the tool kit, and stacking up this beautiful series of accidental discoveries. We are just following the little breadcrumbs of joy and seeing where they go. Usually towards unleashing some new fresh hell of a prep list for our poor bar.



BARTENDERS IN OUR COMMUNITY

There are a bunch of cool Queer people across the world building safe and welcoming places and being just overall cool people. More people should know about them.

Queer and Trans bartenders are the lifeblood of our communities, and we want to help make it easier for us to find each other.

COOL PEOPLE DOING COOL SHIT

Call Lane Social



Milley Kendrick

*Favourite cocktail: Brandy Sazerac
Leeds, United Kingdom She/Her*

@LibFrogCocktails LibFrogCocktails.com

Queerness for me, directly influences my perseverance. Trans folk have to go through a lot, and I've had to fight to be who I am. Bartending allows me to be that authentic self, unapologetically.

Turning Call Lane Social, a particularly busy dive bar down the party street of Call Lane in Leeds, into anything resembling safe and welcoming was a challenge. It starts by being uncompromising in your beliefs, and being willing to challenge others, including superiors. It is one thing to have a zero tolerance policy against harassment, homophobia, transphobia, violence, racism etc... It is a totally different thing to follow through, and make it very clear that not only are those things unacceptable, but that guests caught engaging in such things will be removed indefinitely.

I will admit that, in the modern online world, I particularly struggle - it just doesn't feel like my space. For me, tangibility involves engaging in your community. I'm a bartender, but I'm also a musician. By sharing my music, my drinks, and my art with others in my community, they become tangible, and meaning is derived from sharing my art with my peers.

*Favourite cocktail: Mezcal Negroni
Toronto, Canada He/Him
@Aaron_Hatchell*

Ace Hotel



Aaron Hatchell

For me, embracing my Queerness was the first step towards feeling accepted. My Queerness is about more than just who I am attracted to, it's about realizing I'm a part of a bigger picture. This means unpacking the values and norms I had grown up with and how they effected how I see myself and the world that surrounds me. I strive to offer nonjudgmental, open-ended, and expansive spaces in my work. Whether we're discussing identity, creativity, or problem-solving, I strive to create cocktails that open up space for social conversation. Allowing people to think actively and in the present not just passively and rest on the shoulders of the past.

My Queerness is translated into the world of physical things in many ways. The way I talk, walk and interact with people not only at work but in my personal life as well allows me translate my Queerness in my own unique way. Growing up, I was always afraid to show this off but now having grown up and seeing more "Queers in the wild" I've learned that this tool can be very effective and allow you to communicate with others even without having to speak. Not being afraid to express myself through my clothing, expressions or speech has been truly freeing and I wish I would have done it sooner. Identity and visibility is super important and representation within communities and spaces needs to continue to increase. I didn't feel that my Queerness would be accepted in many social settings because I had never physically seen someone act the ways in which I wanted to or express myself in the ways I thought were normal. Having said that, I am consciously trying to be more open, expressive and physically allow myself the space to express myself in the ways in which I think are important.

*Favourite drink: Balsam Dark Beer
Edmonton, Canada They/Them
@Dandy_daannes*

Ale Architect



Dana Wasylshen

My Queerness informs all the work that I do. As a bartender in a taproom, being Queer subverts what people would expect and expands the way I interact with people. Besides bartending, I have recently completed a certificate in Sexual Health Education. Therefore, my Queerness really informs that work as it's my goal to provide comprehensive, sex positive, and inclusive information regarding sex, relationships, sexuality, and gender. With the regulars that come into the taproom, I often find myself having these open conversations with them and it is truly beautiful to be able to have such dialogue with folks.

Where I work, I warmly greet folks who come in and just by being myself I hope others feel safe to do the same. I'm also nonjudgmental and trauma informed so that however someone might be feeling as they come in they know they are welcome. It's a tender space that I create. I truly feel like I'm Queering a space that is typically dominated by cishet guys.

My Queerness translates into the physical world of things by how I express myself and my body with clothing and chainmail jewelry. I think it also translates into the objects that I bring around with me, such as my notebook and drawing book, dried flowers in my pockets and rocks that I collect.

Good Drinks Bad Art

Toreador

1.5oz Blanco Tequila

0.75oz Lime Juice

0.5oz Apricot Liqueur

Shake and single strain into a chilled coupe glass

Garnish with a lime wheel.

A massively popular tequila daisy all across Australia, and one I hadn't heard of prior to my visit there. Its a welcome shift from a classic Margarita if you want something familiar with just the right amount of novelty.

Flor De Jerez

1.5oz Amontillado Sherry

0.75oz Aged Jamaican Rum

0.75oz Lemon Juice

0.25oz Apricot Liqueur

Shake and double strain into a chilled coupe glass

Garnish with a lemon twist.

A 2009 Joaquin Simo cocktail from Death and Co and one of my all time favourite drinks. This, alongside the last Mechanical Art, are the 2 main cocktails I would talk about when asked about cocktails back home.



Cynar Paloma

2oz Cynar

0.5oz Lime Juice

4oz Grapefruit Soda

Built in a chilled collins glass

garnish with a grapefruit wedge and a salt rim.

Few drinks speak to me as much on a 38° day with an absurd amount of humidity. Thirst quenching, delicious, bitter, fresh, crushable, stop reading and make a pitcher of these for you and your closest friends.

Japanese Slipper

1oz Midori

1oz Orange Liqueur

1oz Lemon Juice

Shake, double strain into a chilled Nick and Nora

garnish with a lemon twist or a cherry

Resoundingly across everywhere I went, one truth echoed. Midori is back. This neon, lower ABV, 80s club classic exemplifies so much with where the bar scene is trending towards right now. Fun, silly, retro, and just an immediate clear cult classic.

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Our Contributors

The Skipping Stone Foundation

Evan Flynn

The Worlds 50 Best Bars

Suntory Roku Gin


People such as yourself

FULL OF
HBD MAIKO
HBD MAIKO
SUNSHINE

JOIN THE COMMUNITY

FOLLOW US ON INSTAGRAM- @PlacesYouAreWelcomeZine

SUBMIT TO OUR NEXT ISSUE PlacesYouAreWelcome.com



The world is better when people make bad art. start by
vandalizing this page.

STEREO ☐

NOISE RED.:

NO.

PLACES YOU ARE WELCOME

60

100

50

0

ISSUE#3: ANALOGUE EXPRESSIONS

With love, Calliope