

How to beat stress...with SEX - Trans and HIV positive - #20biteen

Queer LONDON



BGT finalist

La Voix



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Letter from the *editor*

To my dear reader,

Christmas has come around and our first issue has arrived. It's here, it's queer, and it's certainly not one that you want to miss!

London needed a magazine for the young, the fun, and the quirky, and we are here to fill that gap.

Queer London is not just a magazine, but a lifestyle. Being loud and proud while looking at the best events, current issues, and sexual tips and tricks.

Our first issue includes an exclusive interview with our cover girl **QUEEN**, La Voix. She lets us in on life as a comedian.

As well as this we attended the Body Worlds exhibiton, seeing each and every organ you can imagine!

As well as the fun, this issue also looks at some of the problems being faced within the **LGBTQ community** at the moment: biphobia, racism, and more.

And don't worry, we did not forget to get hot and steamy! Does stress affect our ability to climax? Do lesbians think they are immune to STDs? We made sure to dive deep in.

I hope you **love** the issue, and I'll be sure to catch up with you in the next one,

Monique

Our *esteemed* contributors...



Jakub is fun and irreverent. He has a passion for all types of journalism - especially the arts.



Mary is passionate filmmaking, music and food. She likes to write about important issues like health and equality.

Alina is a passionate fashionista - you'll never catch her out of style. She LOVES photojournalism.



Caitlin is an out and proud lesbian, who loves writing about political issues in the LGBTQ community.

4 PLAY TV

Have you ever sat down in front of your laptop or a TV and wondered why most of the stories are about straight white characters? Then, maybe you started to wonder if there are any shows

out there about queer characters of colour, about their lives and their struggles?

One day, Stevii Campbell, 30, asked herself the same question. Now she's the CEO of Mayfive Creative Arts Production, as well as the director and producer of 4playTV.

"Well to be fair, like, one day I just thought to myself, let me just look on YouTube," says Stevii. "I wanted to see like a lesbian web series with black people, like myself..."

She found a few but she thought to herself "Shit! Like, we don't have a London one!" Stevii then got heavily involved in the LG-BTQ community and approached her friends who were in the filmmaking industry saying, "Hey, I've got an idea!"





(Cast members from 4 Play TV)

4playTV is a web series that looks into the lives of four black, gay females. All of these main characters still come from different backgrounds so the issues and struggles they have vary. Each of the characters has their own unique aspect to themselves, they each have their own drive. They all have their reasons and circumstances that makes them do what they do. Some of them are struggling with their sexuality and others with the cultural values of a society that doesn't condone their lives and loves. They're dealing with a variety of issues throughout the first season which has been out for quite some time and is available on YouTube.

Stevii made the entire first season of 4playTV independently with a friend. "Making sure there was crew, making sure, like, the cast was there. But this game was really different than the skill that I'm working now. I've learned a lot on my journey."

The purpose of this particular web series is for the LGBTQ viewers to feel proud of who they are and to feel included on the

screen. Stevii says, "I wanna see more people from my community in Hollywood film, like in big films, for them to have the same opportunities." She is a part of the LGBTQ forum and says that she gets involved whenever she can. Stevii is a community person, a "people person" but not only to the LGBTQ community. While she identifies as gay, she is also trying to support whenever and whoever she can – it doesn't all come down to her sexuality. "These are just people, the same as other people," says Stevii. She has also focused her attention on young people involved in gangs, which will be shown in the upcoming second season of 4playTV.

However, this show is not only about being queer. Stevii wants the series to be known for her creative art and not her identity. "I'd like to be on TV, I'd like to be spreading the message, I'd like to be doing things like, you know... workshops. I'd like to have places where people could feel included."

Lakbir Tari, 24, the sound operator for season two, says that he,

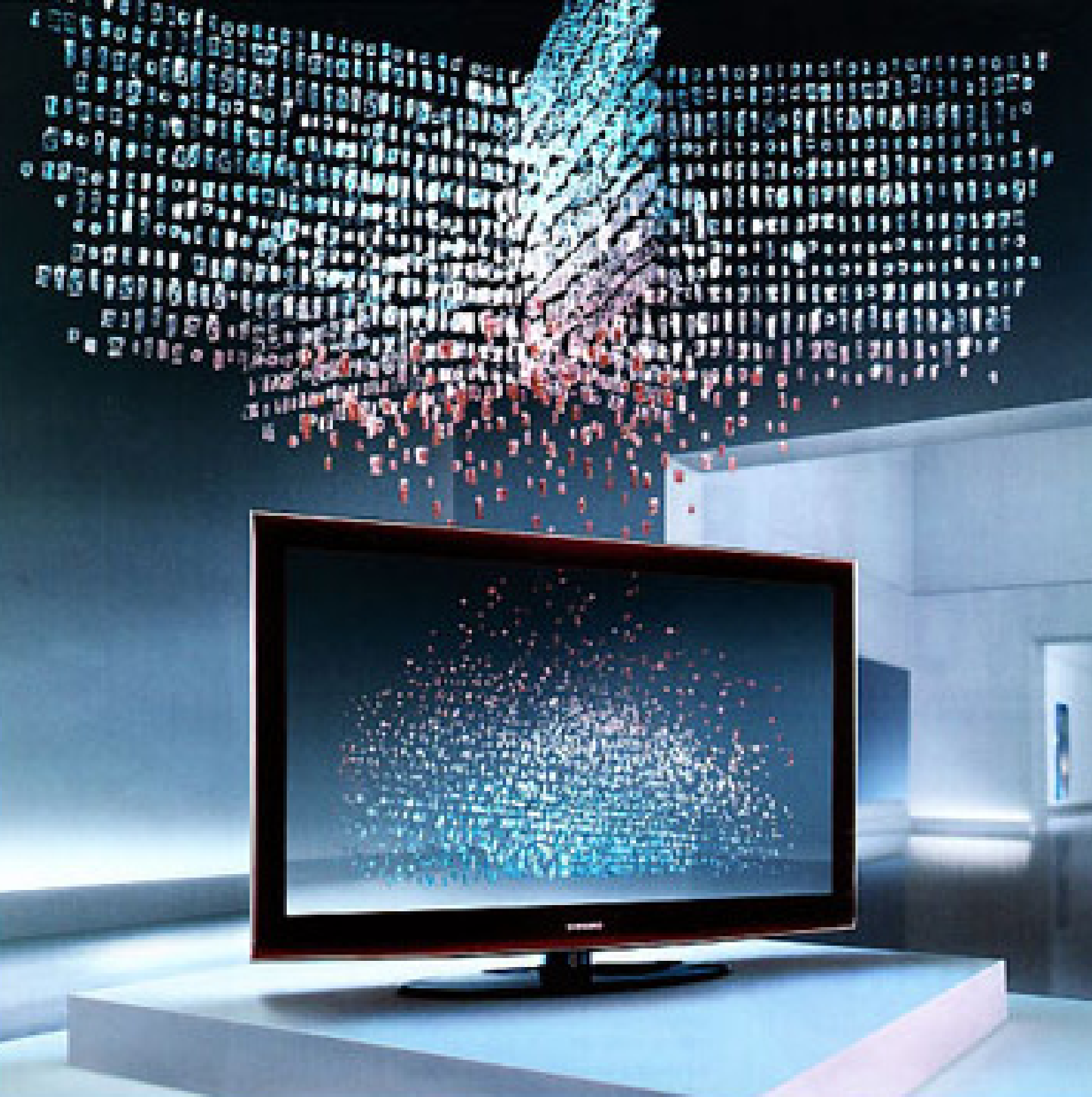
being a straight male, at first got involved just because he was looking for something to do. "Four young characters who're all women and gay? I was quite intrigued by that because I thought it was something different. We don't really see these situations happening," says Lakbir. "We usually see a lot of men or young male characters as the main protagonists."

He says that in every episode of 4playTV you can see the different struggles and issues the characters are facing. Sometimes it might be a family member not approving of the character being gay, the transition of a transgender character like in the new season, or even the street life of London and its life of crime.

Season two of 4playTV is due in early 2019, with more struggles and more tackling of the issues that some had overcome and others still have to face. Stevii proudly says, "We're gonna be coming into the New Year definitely with 4playTV."

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It's no mistake that this artist's work has been attributed to deities since the inception of the term 'beauty' and that history's most adored sculptures and paintings are mere interpretations or attempted copies of this artist's original work.



We are of course talking about nature and we invite you to explore the unique beauty bestowed literally within us while maybe even learning something about these intricate constructs we call our bodies.

There is no better place for this than Body Worlds right in the heart of London. This unique exhibition features an astounding number of expertly preserved and dissected real human bodies, formerly belonging to individuals who donated them for scientific research and education.

Right now you might be picturing some sort of macabre horror show or the basement of a deranged psychopath but that is far from how this exhibition is portrayed; it is impossible not to be filled with respect when confronted by exhibit after exhibit painstakingly shaped to reveal to you some specific part of yourself in

real flesh. What is just as difficult is controlling the urge to read, listen and learn exactly how this particular piece of what makes you human functions.

And the breadth of featured pieces of us is truly impressive, the functions of all our major organs and systems are coherently explained. So much so that we found ourselves reading and listening to every little piece of information presented as did almost everyone we talked to after the exhibition, even many kids had fun learning about the human body.

The exhibition will be additionally compelling to those interested in mental health as subjects such as dementia and stress are explored in detail with visible comparisons between bodies of healthy minds and those who suffered from mental illness. And while we're on the subject of

health the exhibition also features displayed organs of smokers and obese individuals, so if nothing seems to be motivating you to stop smoking or start exercising then perhaps a personal view of what your lungs, spleen and heart might end up looking like if you don't might be the push you need.

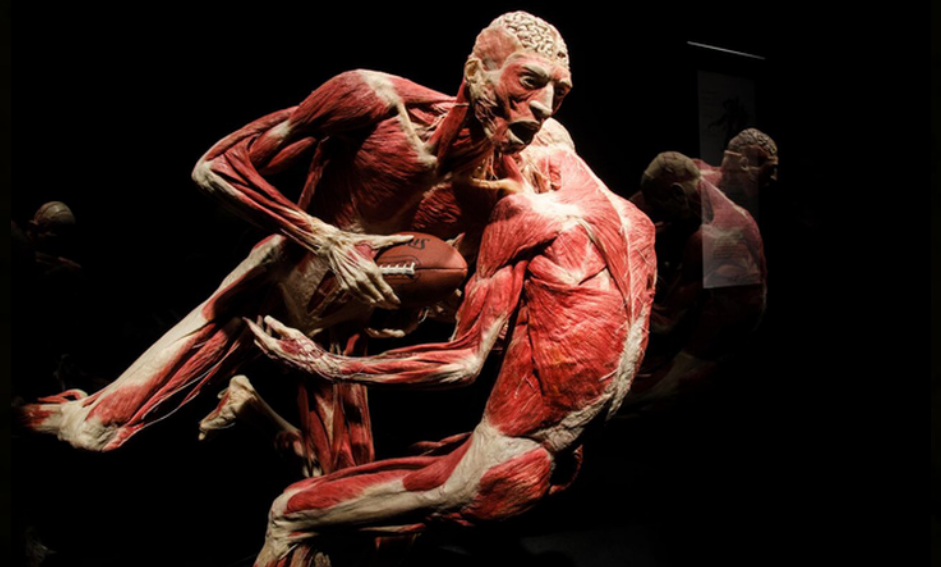
Some disclaimers are in order however. Firstly (and this should go without saying) do not go if you are particularly squeamish or if you have a particular fear of death. This exhibition displays real human body parts. One specific body part that's prominently displayed is the penis so if for some reason you aren't fully into seeing many of those then this is something you might want to avoid. And lastly you should be warned that this exhibition does also feature a dead fetus within a woman who died during a pregnancy which we understand

some people might find distasteful.

By now you've probably decided if this is the kind of day out for you or not but for those on the fence for whatever reason whether it's the £25 ticket price tag or the possibility that you might end up being repulsed by what you see; there is a free alternative for those who might want to dip their toes into the themes explored in Body Worlds and their particular methods of presentation.

This is the Wellcome Collection, and no that is not a typo. The main aim of which is to challenge how we view health. This is mostly done through temporary exhibitions (some past examples range from an exhibition of artwork and poetry created by former residents of the Bedlam asylum to a showcase of the history of dentistry to what's currently on; 'living with buildings' an exploration of the effects our urban surroundings have on our physical and mental health.) however the main star here is the Wellcome collection itself which features mummified bodies and human cross-sections preserved in formaldehyde among many other weird and wacky artefacts mister Wellcome managed to collect along his travels including medieval sex toys and Charles Darwin's skull pummelled whale-bone walking stick.

Overall Body Worlds is an incredible experience and a must see for anyone who can stomach it if for other reason than the fact that it's one of the few places where you can get an anatomically correct 'I (heart) London' jumper.



D _ C K

NOPE. IT'S JUST A DUCK



**FEELING DIRTY?
TAKE A SHOWER**





Double Minority

While discrimination against people in the LGBTQ community is a huge issue, it also appears there is a large amount of prejudice against BAME LGBTQ people, this time coming from within their own community. Monique Reynolds-Blanche talks to queer people of colour about the issue.

Fifty-one percent of Black, Asian and minority ethnic people have faced racial discrimination within the LGBTQ community, according to the campaign group Stonewall. Many people from BAME backgrounds face a different experience within the LGBTQ community than their white peers, and are considered a double minority.

"It doesn't surprise me at all. If anything, I'm surprised the figure isn't higher," says Jason Okundaye, a 21-year-old policy officer who is proudly both black and gay. He grew up in a British Nigerian community, where he attended church hall parties, eating his favourite Okele and Jollof rice.

"My sexuality is also important

because it's something I've always reckoned with, and felt I had to reconcile that with being black and Nigerian," he says.

"Whilst I'm just minding my business, white gay men will often come up to me either assuming I'm a drug dealer or know a drug dealer, or asking if they can sample my 'big black cock'.



Whenever I tell them to get lost, the retaliation of racist insults and degrading comments is disgusting.”

If the same racism that takes place within the LGBTQ community, was being used in a work environment, or in public spaces, it would be considered as a hate crime. The racism against queer BAME people is appearing to be ignored. It seems that it is easier to get away with saying racist things within a community behind closed doors, as there will be no serious consequences.

BAME people are starting to find their space within the LGBTQ community, but it’s been an uphill climb. For example, the gay dating app Grindr has been known for its overt racism against black and minority ethnic people, making it a safe space only for white gay men.

“Online dating apps are an easy way to discriminate against racialised people of course, because they’re convenient and you can call someone a ‘nigger’ or demand that they ‘fuck you like a thug’ at the tap of a finger,” said Okundaye.

But this September, the app launched a campaign called ‘#KindrGrindr’ with the aim of promoting inclusivity, protecting the BAME community and stopping racism on the app.

In addition, the last 10 years have seen lots of new events for BAME queer people to connect and be comfortable with the people who surround them. UK Black Pride was launched in August 2006 as an alternative to Pride in London.



Black Pride promotes unity and inclusion of all types of people no matter their background.

Sarauniya Shehu, who goes by the name Sas, also attends Black Pride each year. “UK Black Pride is the only Pride I acknowledge,” the 24-year-old, Bi/Queer black woman said.

“It is extremely refreshing to be in a space where you are not the minority in either sense. I feel like being queer often means you are expected to drop your cultural background, as it is not seen as compatible. It is hard to be Black in queer spaces and it is hard to be queer in Black spaces, and it often feels like you are only showing part of yourself depending on where you are.”

To solve the issue of being stereotyped or feeling unwelcomed, Sas now attends a number of different events like Black pride that welcomes LGBTQ people of all ethnic backgrounds and promotes unity. These include BBZ, which is a collective that hold exhibitions and turn ups, usually being South London based; Black Femme Film, who do film showings and hold after parties that are safe spaces for femme people; and Pxssy Palace, a monthly club event.

“If you’re a full-on clubber, Pxssy Palace is the place to be.” Sas explains, “There is something fantastic about seeing same sex couples dancing to dancehall, bashment and afrobeats together. It’s the meeting of the two parts of my identity – I no longer feel like I have to only show part of myself.”



A **Q**ueer Education

As new advice suggests that primary classes should be teaching children about LGBTQ identities, we ask two queer women to cast their minds all the way back to their own school days.

This month, The Royal College of Paediatricians has made a recommendation that children should be taught about LGBTQ identities and terms from as early as primary school. This comes as Scotland becomes the first country in the world to incorporate LGBTQ issues across the school curriculum. So what exactly do queer adults remember from their own sexual education lessons?

"I just remember, like, wooden sticks, and having condoms, and that was about it really!" giggles Emily, 29, who is gay.

That's the first thing Chloé, 28 and identifying as queer, mentions too: "The classic condom-on-a-banana trick."

Neither of them recall learning anything about being LGBTQ, about the terminology or the issues, in any of their school lessons. In fact, they both sound a little surprised at the suggestion. But looking back, do they think they would have benefitted from it?

"I think exploring LGBT issues would absolutely have been a good idea," says Chloé. "Kind of clearing up common misconceptions and pointing out that there is a big grey area between gay and straight. It's not either or."

Emily agrees that it would probably have helped, but is less concerned about matters of identity. "It's more the emotional side of

things than the physical side," she points out. "You don't really get taught about how relationships work."

This lack of understanding affects all young people, regardless of sexuality or gender identity, and indeed, the government has committed to make Relationship and Sexual Education (RSE) compulsory in all schools from 2020. In a 2017 statement, the Department for Education (DfE) highlights current issues like underage sexting, and the importance of teaching "how to recognise, understand and build healthy relationships."

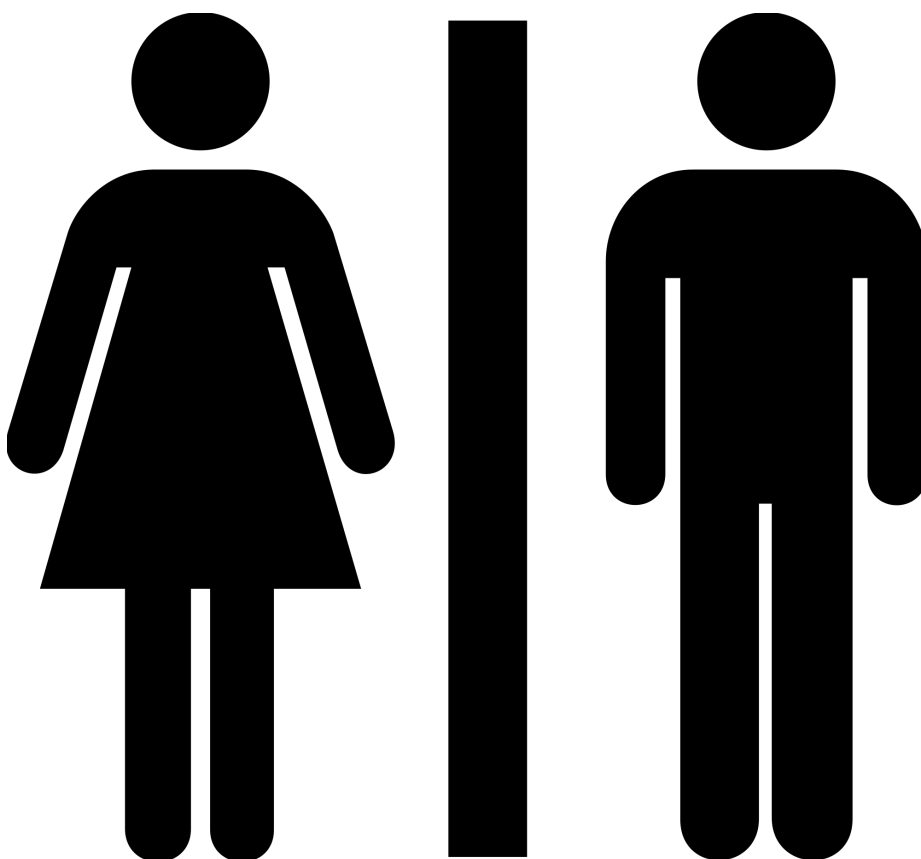
Emily thinks this side of RSE is perhaps particularly relevant to queer youth: "It's a very confusing time," she says, "Because obviously you're lead towards men and women together, and no one tells you how to be gay." It can be isolating too: "I remember when I was growing up, I don't really remember my friends talking about emotions," she adds, sounding

thoughtful.

While considering her own ideas for the perfect RSE lesson, Chloé recalls something that was helpful: "In one of the talks, they had set up a box in which people anonymously submitted their questions beforehand," she recalls. "I think something like that helps enormously in the kind of situation where ignorance is jumped on mercilessly." She thinks teachers should try and consider what questions students actually have.

Considering neither woman learned anything about their sexual identities from school, do they at least have memories more significant than trying to put a condom on something it wasn't designed to stretch over?

"I think the only time they showed us actual genitals was when they did a gruesome slideshow on infected ones with STIs," Chloé reminisces. "It scarred everyone."





Comedy Animal

On a cold November night, Roar with Laughter annual comedy gala brought thousands of people together for two purposes... saving wild-life and to just have a laugh on a Friday evening.

Buckets are passed through the crowd, and cash pours into them. In London's Eventim Apollo, the Zoological Society of London (ZSL) is raising money with the help of Jennifer Saunders, Harriet Thorpe, and a very special drag queen.

The line-up this year included Lee Ridley more known as the 'Lost Voice Guy', the winner of Britain's Got Talent 2018 (BGT), Nish Kumar, Ronni Ancona, Shazia Mirza, Mo Gilligan, Rob Deering, La Voix and Lewis MacLeod.

Tatiana Arias, 20, a film student of London Metropolitan University says, "I literally cried with laughter, my stomach hurt from all the laughing!" What was her favourite act? Tatiana had never seen a drag queen doing live stand-up, so if she had to pick one performance of the night, it would be La Voix – in her beautiful blue and sparkly gown – the

semi-finalist of BGT. A glamorous diva who is not only hilarious but also has a voice so interesting that it cannot be unheard.

La Voix, says about her comedy, "It's very current, it's very fresh, it's very off the coast and it's very new." She adds, "You know, we can all have a laugh about each other and things and situations in the world and different scenarios we find ourselves in. I think it's all so easy in this day and age to get too scared about what to say without upsetting someone or

offending someone. I think what my show is... it just pops that bubble and lets you be able to talk about anything and anyone... and it's all tied with diva songs, I think it's just a very relaxed way of doing comedy." She was inspired from an early age, by her family. Her father would play diva performers like Barbra Streisand, and Shirley Bassey, who La Voix did an impersonation of during the event.

La Voix said she was a huge fan of 'Lost Voice Guy'. She says it



was the first time she got to meet a fellow BGT contestant and that he was hilarious and lovely to meet.

Hosts Jennifer Saunders and Harriet Thorpe were dressed as wildcats the whole show. La Voix found it hilarious as she thought they're just going to wear that for the opening but "they brought no other clothes so they had to stay in these faux fur costumes from beginning to the end."

Lewis MacLeod and Ronni Ancona performed after the interval as Donald and Melania Trump. They got booed immediately as they stepped onto the stage "Because they're obviously dressed as Trump and Melania." According to La Voix, that was one of the most hysterical acts throughout the night because it was so politically current and "just hilarious". La Voix has been doing events like this for years, and thinks that it is important to support "charities across the board." Weeks before she did a comedy spot at the Palladium for Ten: A Decade of Dreams breast cancer fundraiser.

"When you have any sort of voice, whether it's from the TV, theatre or even if it's just a strong

presence on social media, I think you have a duty to make sure that you're, you know, keeping awareness of these causes."





JEFFREE STAR
COSMETICS



Our Healthy Minds

An ominous illness seems to be plaguing our community. We pride ourselves on our unmatched positivity and acceptance, yet it seems we ignore our internal issues and brush off problems without second thought.

By Jakub Jozefowicz

But maybe the time has come for that to change.

Progress in the acceptance of our community brought with it interest, one manifestation of which is the charity 'Stonewall' and their recent study titled the "Health Report" exposed some statistics which can't be ignored. A survey of 5000 LGBT Brits aged 18 - 24 found that a shocking 52% had suffered from depression and 62 from anxiety in the last year. Furthermore in that year one in eight people had attempted to take their own life and 46% of trans people have thought about suicide, and to top it all off an apparent 16% said they drink almost every day.

And what we found from private interviews seems to support these statistics. Almost everyone appears fine on the outside but many of us have dark secrets such as a reluctance to wear shorts for the fear of revealing the innumerable self harm scars on the thighs or some things even more extreme like a transgender man revealed to us that he wants to join the army because he doesn't truly value his life to things less serious but just as important to acknowledge and tackle such as a difficulty to wake up and get out of bed each morning likely stemming from depression. And let's not forget the drinking habits we seem to uphold; we're not saying if you drink you are self medicating, but make sure that's the case.

Now while the numbers are high this of course does not mean that we are all suffering from

poor mental health however it is still hugely important for those fortunate enough to be healthy to be aware of the issue due to the likelihood of them eventually interacting with someone in need and to help and encourage them do something about it.

And never feel like the problems are too minor to be taken seriously. The NHS recommends reaching out if any of the following often apply to you: You feel tired or lack energy, feel tearful, shut yourself away from people, no longer want to do things you usually enjoy, use alcohol or drugs to cope with feelings, harm yourself or have thoughts about self harming, have thoughts of taking your own life.

Finding professional help can be as easy as talking to your GP, but fortunately there are many other options available to us.

One notable help organization is 'Mind' which has a specialised branch for the LGBT community full of very experienced individuals and a handy hotline for anyone that just needs to talk to someone who knows what they're talking about from the comfort of anywhere and without the need to go out and wait in countless queues and fill out endless stacks of paperwork.

Lastly while the services for mental health provided by the NHS have been widely criticised there are promises of improvement in the works and new initiatives for helping gay and bisexual men with their mental health issues and making the services more inviting and accessible to them.

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Bisexuality

Not Just a Phase?

By Aliana Stefania Ivanovici

Bisexuality is probably not a taboo - not anymore. More and more people recognize this sexual orientation without being ashamed or uncertain of what to say. And many of those are women who care about what their family and friends might think.

People often think that bisexuality is a temporary phase – something to do with the madness of youth, or a desire to be a ‘modern’ twenty-first century woman.

Maybe people are mistaken. Or maybe the dilemma of bisexuality is born only of the desire of a woman to be considered a free spirit, and somehow a modern person who goes along with the latest social trends.

Among the usual talk over a glass of wine with Anne, 27, a customer service assistant and a bisexual woman, says: “It’s simply how I function normally. I am attracted by women, just as much as men, because I admire and love the curves of a woman, just as I admire a man’s virility and wisdom”.

She does not know for sure whether it is a choice that comes in time with maturity, but she is certain that: “a relationship with a woman is intense.”

A relationship with a woman leads to another level of attraction and love, because two women can share the same vision or, as she says: “She can fully under-

stand nature, flirting with delicacy and sensuality, with the bonus that you can’t accuse her as being blockhead.”

And there is so much fun in a relationship between two bisexual women: “You will end up cooking twice as many meals and you will share a much larger wardrobe.”

People might wonder – are we hearing more about bisexuality today because women are now able to express themselves, more free from traditional conservative and religious beliefs? Or was bisexuality just undiscovered and now it’s being scrutinized without fear?

Well, the surprise is that bisexuality really has more and more prevalence among women – and this is proven by research. There are now three times more women who recognize their bisexual identity than in the past years, and are also three times more than men.

Perhaps that is because society’s views women in relationships with women so differently to men in relationships with men. Even the image of two women kissing is widely considered to be beautiful and sexually charged.

Even Katy Perry’s song ‘I Kissed a Girl’ has an explanation: The woman is looking more and more to discover her own identity, her own sexuality, without fear, especially as society no longer judges at all. And this is nothing about being in the center of attention, showing off or behaving childish in order to make it look interesting. This is about finding and discovering your inner self. And



there are other clever ways to do that anyway.

Carmen, 25, an architecture student at University College London, says: "I had a few relationships with men, the most serious relationship lasted 4 years. After the lovely start-up period that probably exists in most relationships, of course we both gave our masks down and we started to show up gradually the way we actually were as human beings - living together. Inevitably, sooner or later, no matter how good an 'actor' you might try to be - the truth comes out."

She said: "We find out that we did not fit together. I wanted to evolve professionally while trying to have a nice relationship with him. One of my main goals was to build up my career and this changed him a lot. Later on after we broke up, I realized he was trying to wash my brain out but fortunately he didn't manage to."

He used to say that I don't need evolve in my career life because I was good both financially and professionally. He kept discouraging me every time I was explaining him why I would like to study more and get into the industry."

She added, "He was abusing me emotionally but thanks Lord I was ambitious and realistic enough to be aware of my potential and what I was capable of. You know what people say: love yourself, know your worth. Confident in myself, I finally opened my eyes and I figure out I was in a toxic relationship so in the end we went on different ships."

How does she feel now?

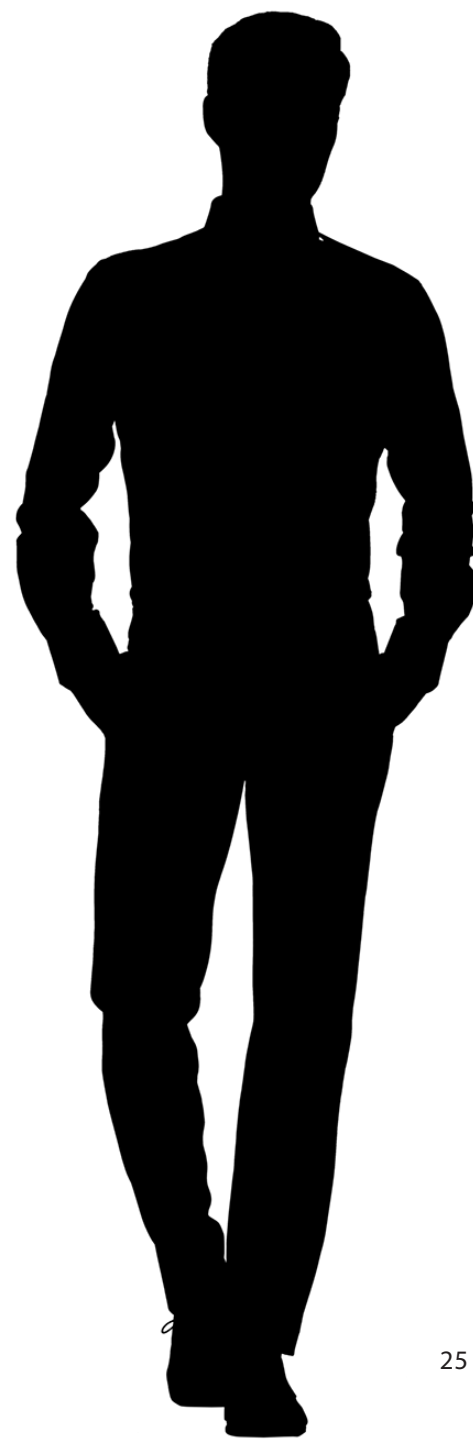
"Looking in the past, I am very proud of myself, I may have suffered but I've learned from this experience and soon I will also get my architecture degree. My family has supported me throughout everything and I had the opportunity to meet amazing people who have strengthened my beliefs but also expanded my life perspective. I don't believe in coincidences, I think everything happens for a reason."

It is said that bisexuality characterizes the modern woman. Is it because they become safer, more free, unprejudiced? Or are women no longer afraid to say what they like, what they love, what they want and who they are? Are women pushing the limits?

Carmen said that she started going out in different groups of people and that was when she found out she was also attracted to women: "I was happy to discover myself and if this was meant to be my destiny and deeply engaging in a relationship with a woman, well I said why not, what do I have to lose?"

So why not see bisexuality as totally normal? Bisexual women are clearly affectionate and dedicated to one another when they enter a relationship knowing and understanding their orientation.

Is bisexuality just a modern trend, a way for someone to stand out, or is it just like any other sexual identity - normality?



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Trans, Queer and HIV positive

We speak to a young man who has lived with HIV throughout most of his life, having to tackle not only the stigma of having HIV, but having HIV as a queer trans man.

By Monique Reynolds-Blanche

National HIV testing week is kicking off from the 17th of November, raising awareness of HIV in the UK and encouraging people to get tested. HIV has always disproportionately impacted minority communities this has continued into this decade. A 2017 Public Health England report on trends in HIV diagnoses across the UK showed that 27,000 Black Africans were seen for HIV health care in 2017, along with 36,710 White gay men, and 123 trans people.

And although the amount of trans people contracting HIV is significantly lower than the oth-

er groups in society with HIV, it does not mean the trans community should be left out of the discussion.

Eli Fitzgerald is a 19-year-old Queer Trans HIV activist; he works to raise awareness and campaign around the topic of HIV within the trans community.

"I feel that HIV is still seen as this super scary disease that only cis-gendered gay men can get - and this just isn't true at all," says Fitzgerald, who grew up with HIV. He spends his time travelling around Europe, attending HIV campaigning events, his most recent trip being to the Netherlands for #AIDS2018.

Dealing with HIV whilst being both trans and queer has often placed Eli in the midst of awkward doctor appointments. "A doctor or someone will just assume my sexuality without asking me, because they don't want to make me uncomfortable," he says.

Being referred to as the wrong gender delegitimizes someone's identity and can cause a lot of stress or anxiety. This can result in trans male and females not wanting to attend checkups concerning their sexual health. "If terminology was friendlier, trans and non-binary people would be more open to talking about sexual health and therefore improve their wellbeing," Eli says.

Jess Bradley from the Action for Trans health committee commented at the hearing of parliament's equality committee in 2015 about the unequal treatment that trans people receive from the NHS. "A lot of GPs deny

healthcare to trans people, illegally, based on the fact that they don't agree with the choices that they've made," said Bradley.

Eli routinely shares his different experiences as a queer trans man on his twitter page '@positive_aaron', keeping it real and sharing all of the issues he has to face on a day-to-day basis.

He has shared a story from 2017, when he was admitted to hospital after he stopped taking his HIV medication. Instead of doctors enquiring about Eli's mental health, doing a full assessment on him and finding out why he stopped taking his medication, they assumed that the issue had to be the fact that he was trans and HIV positive.

"It got to the point where no matter how loud I shouted or however many medical words I used, they didn't believe or understand that these 'problems' was not what was wrong with me," he tweeted.

"It's 2018. We need to change our approach to how we teach about HIV, we need to change what we say and we need the educators to actually understand the facts and the truth about HIV and how it can affect anyone," he says.

"Whilst I understand that HIV can be a 'difficult' topic to talk about that doesn't mean that we should be avoiding talking about it," says Eli. "HIV positive trans people do exist and we are here and we deserve to be listened to and treated just like anyone else living with HIV."

Alex Sparrowhawk from the Terrence Higgins Trust, agrees that there is a need to represent all types of people when talking about HIV.

"We make sure we are being inclusive, focusing on all of the LGBTQ community, promoting good sexual health along with HIV," he says.

"If we update our patient infor-

mation leaflets, we make sure the language in the leaflet is right and has trans-friendly terminology."

The Terrence Higgins Trust is a British charity that works year round to raise awareness for HIV. Each year the charity produces a campaign in aid of National HIV testing week.

Sparrowhawk explained how this year's campaign featured a wide range of people. "Twenty-seven different models were used in the campaign this year from all different communities, this included both trans men and women. We had to make sure that the campaign related to people that it is going to affect."

Eli agrees. "I think personally a lot of the negative experiences of being a queer trans man living with HIV is having to often justify who I am, having to retell my life story to just kind of get health-care professionals to just slightly understand the situation."





durex condoms

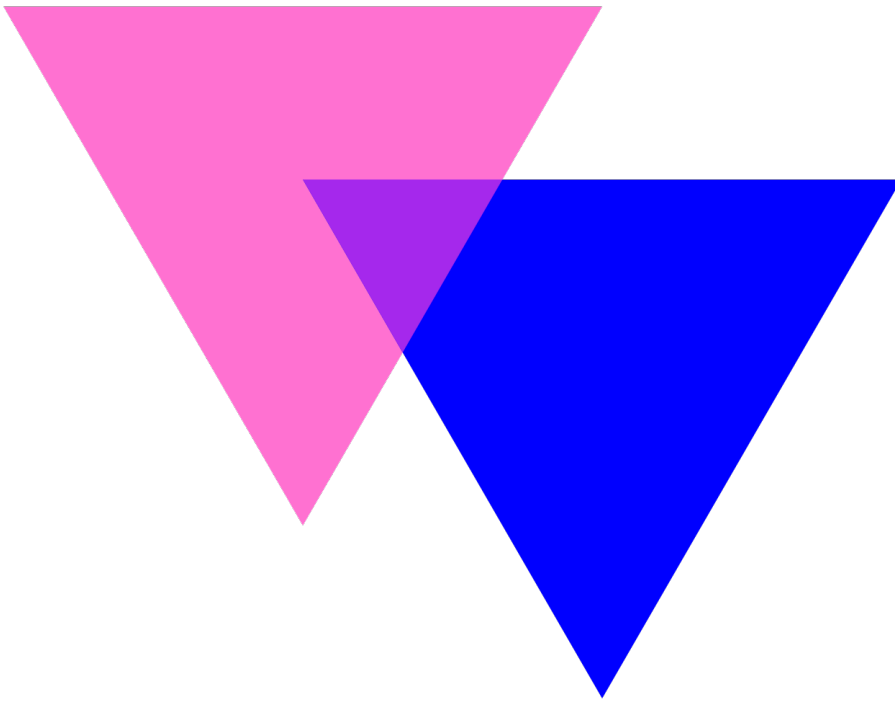


other condoms



What's the Deal with **Biphobia**?

If the internet is to be believed, #20biteen is going to be the year of the bisexual, and some would say it's about time. In anticipation of the approaching New Year, we speak to three different people about what it's really like to be out there and bi.



#20gayteen is on its way out, and it's been an amazing year for LGBTQ representation. And with shows like *The Bi Life* from E!, and celebrities like Tessa Thompson and Janelle Monáe publicly coming out as being attracted to both men and women, it might seem like bisexuality – that most misunderstood of sexual identities – is finally entering the mainstream. But is that really the case?

Bisexual people have long faced casual prejudice in both the straight and LGBTQ communities, and it is an issue we have only recently begun to face up to. The Independent Community Advisory Board for Pride in London stated in their 2017 report that, "Bi people, despite forming the largest component of the LGBT population, remain marginalised within that community and in society at large."

In fact, it was only this year that Pride in London had its first ever Bi Pride float.

So what's the truth about biphobia? Is it disappearing, or just changing?

"When I do broach the subject of my bisexuality with more heteronormative gay folks, I find the main response I get is incredulity and disbelief that I'm really bi." Amy, 38, has been out as bisexual and polyamorous since 2013. "Coming out has been a gradual process," she says. "I still don't mention my sexuality at work unless someone actually brings up the subject of relationships. In which case, I will be open about it."

Amy came out after the end of a monogamous marriage to a man. She feels that her immersion in the polyamorous community has come with more acceptance: "Within the LGBT world, I have experienced only a little biphobia, but I think that is because I mainly mix with other bi and queer and polyamorous people who are much more open to alternative lifestyles and are less threatened

by bisexuality."

Lyra, 31, is a bisexual trans woman, who navigates the world with intersecting LGBTQ identities. "I identify as queer most of the time," she explains. "This is because 'queer' represents a lot more aspects of my identity than just my sexuality." She adds: "In 'straight' circles, I use the bisexual label because I think bi representation is super important."

One of the biggest issues faced by the bisexual community is judgment from monosexuals – people who identify as hetero or homosexual – when dating. The pervasive myth that bisexual people are more likely to cheat 'because they have more options' has lingered as a quieter, more insidious form of prejudice.

Lyra has also found other problems when dating: "As a trans woman who is proudly fat and proudly gender non-conforming, I find a lot of preconceptions are made about my bisexuality," she

says. "A lot of the time I only date other queer and bisexual people because I know that, with them, I will not have my gender questioned as a result of my sexuality, something I can't be sure of with monosexual people."

Her hopes for future changes in perception also capture the dangers faced by trans people around the world. "I would like to feel that I do not need to fear for

"I've felt that attitudes towards bi men are slightly different," he adds. "I've often heard people say that they're gay but in denial."

Amy echoes this: "From conversations I've had with male bisexual friends, they have encountered far more biphobia from gay men, who often refuse to date them, than I have with lesbians." And it's often no better trying to

gender and then another has not 'gone straight' or 'gone gay' but is expressing fundamental part of their bi identity," says Lyra. Amy has very similar feelings: "Characters in TV shows are often considered straight until they have a same sex relationship, at which point they are gay," she points out.

David, however, thinks that things are getting better: "I'm actually



my life when dating monosexual people due to the bi or gay panic they feel dating a trans person."

Bisexual men also face their own unique set of challenges and prejudices. David, 30, has been out as bisexual for two years. He describes the difficulties of that coming out process: "I knew I wasn't gay, but definitely wasn't straight either, and bisexuality was less prominent in my early life."

date straight people: "Straight cis men have a tendency to fetishise bisexuality in women whereas they are often disgusted by bisexuality in men," Amy explains.

How would Amy, Lyra, and David like to see things change in the future?

Accurate media representation is a big issue: "I'd like wider acknowledgement in the media that bi people exist and that a person who dates someone of one

quite pleased with more recent representation of bisexuality as a normal thing," he says, before adding, "I think this is very recent in my opinion, and I never felt bisexuality was portrayed very well before." He would also like to see bisexuality recognised as a more 'legitimate' sexuality in society.

LGBTQ representation has improved enormously in recent times, but if 2019 really is going to be 'the year of the bisexual', there's still a lot of work to do.

ARE YOU READY TO BE REBORN!

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STRESS

How it affects your health... and sex life

Stress is a huge problem in everybody's life. It can hit at work, in your private life, and in your relationships. But what can you do about it?

"Orgasm is the key to freeing up stress. Whatever happens with your partner when using sex toys, the act itself will give you an extraordinary psychic feeling", says Joanna Halus, 27, a freelance Psychotherapist who graduated from Metropolitan University, London.

"Stress appears when the person does not find himself in real life. When someone else does everything for themselves, they don't think that they'll ever manage to do something for themselves.

After marriage, both men and women realize that there is no one around to help them. The more they are protected from the rhythm and the responsibilities of life, the harder it will be to get used to", says Halus.

The effects of stress are diverse - headaches, dizziness and vomiting, hair and teeth fall, lack of erection, lack of orgasm.

But what - exactly - is stress? "The misunderstanding of the responsibilities to be respected causes a special tension in the body," says Halus. "When you do not understand what you have to do or when, for personal reasons, you do not respect anything you have to do, the inner conflict appears."

One of Halus' patients, Cara, 23, a studio manager in Shoreditch, confessed: "I say I do not understand a task, instead of realizing and doing it."

Then why is this happening? "From comfort and carelessness", says psychotherapist Joanna.

When looking from another perspective - when your mind is "invaded"

by worries, the intimate area cannot enjoy pleasures at maximum capacity. Ironically, the best solution to overcome this deadlock is precisely the action.

Can a stressed person have a successful career or a happy quality sex life? "If a stressed person chooses to have around emotional guards, well-trained people in various fields, he can develop by being supported, a successful career."

Psychotherapy can help a lot. Together with the Psychotherapist, the person learns what's going wrong and how to put it right.

Stress can also decline significantly with sex. Generally, it's just that the sex partner needs to have a lot of patience. Obviously, the first attempts at sexual intercourse may be a total failure. But with patience and understanding, the stressed person can get on the right track.

Here are two examples: The man who cannot get the erection and the woman who cannot reach orgasm. In both cases, the lack of relaxation is the culprit. And in both cases, the Psychotherapist is the missing piece in the emotional puzzle of the subject," says Joanna.

How to beat stress:

- Eight hours of sleep
- Healthy food and lifestyle
- Sexual relationships, at least once every two days
- Exclusion of brain excitations and the intake of vitamins and minerals, especially magnesium
- Getting pampered - Massage at least 1 per week and anti-stress tea.



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