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QUEST

MAGAZINE
Volume 25, #4
July 2018

Lex Allen

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Open Door Pride



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An Interview with singer/songwriter and queer activist Lex Allen

Milwaukee born and raised, Lex Allen has been recognized by mainstream and alternative media alike as an up- and coming artist to watch. Meanwhile, Lex Allen has indeed been watched and heard. A recent performance as the opening act for the summer season's of Humboldt Park Chill on the Hill music series is just one indication of how Lex Allen's sound (and his very presence) has become an integral part of the Cream City's rich and diverse culture. Identifying as queer and gender fluid, Lex Allen's mantra is "I just live my life and I just want to make the best with whomever I decide to be with. The labels are for people who need to put others into a form."

Easily recognized by his signature headscarf and Soul Pop musical style (which he describes as "for people who wake up at 5 am...to get people motivated", Lex Allen's influence in the contemporary culture scene extends well beyond the stage. Last January he was appointed as a member of the Milwaukee Symphony Orchestra's board of directors as a millennial voice to give input on matters of education and community outreach. He is also collaborating with Diverse & Resilient, the Milwaukee based LGBTQ health and capacity building agency, on his Colors in Bloom campaign. The multi-media effort seeks to empower LGBTQ youth with the message "you are beautiful, loved, and worthy...just as you are."

QUEST spoke with Lex Allen about his career, his various on-going projects as well as his most recent and upcoming Pride gigs.

QUEST: Before we get to your latest projects and performances, just one question: How does an artist of any genre stay in Milwaukee and still break into the bigger, national music scene and beyond?

Lex Allen: I come from a family of 11 brothers and sisters but moved out when I was 15. I lived with brother who helped with my music as a role model. My mom supported it. I did leave Milwaukee but I came

back. As of late I have more opportunities to explore here. Milwaukee is a nice home base...family's here. I plan to be in NYC and London and take the music where it needs to go. After Pride Alive in Green Bay I'm going to LA to work on another album and focus on writing for the rest of the month. I'm not stopping or limiting myself. We've been talking to producers overseas. I might end up in Vienna, who knows. But I know when I came back to Milwaukee, there's love.

QUEST: Where are you today?

LA: Every month feels like a whole new year. I'm in a throe of projects, transitioning in the way I create my music, experimenting more into ethno-cultural sound. I launched the Colors in Bloom campaign for LGBTQ youth showing them their outlet and letting them realize themselves and their value before things get too hard. I've been working on it since June of last year and it's definitely been a big learning process. I hope everyone's minds are open. Hate has no place. At the end of the day, it's the other person's issue. I don't know who we'll get to help but there's a lot of unfolding happening. There's so much to do in terms of ground work and finding my place in the LGBTQ community. It's so segregated at times. It's difficult to figure out how to bring it all together through art and performance and the way I speak.

QUEST: Are you taking Bloom national?

LA: We plan to. Every LGBTQ person should know the story. It started in Milwaukee, Fox Valley, and Southeast Wisconsin. It has a broad reach and it's gathering steam. We have billboards and social media but we need more collaboration to get the word out. But there's been amazing response: kids telling me thank you for helping them, finding themselves and living as who they are.

QUEST: And you also released an album...

LA: Sinners and Saints came out Friday 13 in April. It's been well received. I'm listed on DJ Booth music blog's "Top 10 Queer Artists" and on Apple Play List for Pride Month. I'm very pleased with what's happening and we're pushing it and seeing how it goes organically.

QUEST: So now you're doing the Pride circuit. But, as June started out you performed as the season's opening act for

— upon his retirement, NML had a Jim Ruff Day! Lifting a vodka diet in your honor!

Fred Stewart — though in his 90s — this bon vivant of the Cream City was truly enjoying his golden years. The rich stories he would share about exclusive house parties back in the 1960s, being a member of the PTA and while it may have had a few teachers, and I'm sure I would have gotten an education — it had nothing to do with the one the world is more familiar with. I saw Fred the last time, last August, he was with Keith — his companion, as we were saying good bye to a mutual friend. He was a bit frail, and sat — but when it came time to eulogize —

he was up, out of his chair engaging the room as only he could. Fred was dear

enough to present a special gift to me that I will treasure as much as his friendship.

Sunday, July 15 The Hubbard Park Lodge will be the place to say good bye, 4:00 — 7:00 pm.

Ron Jensen AKA Rubbee, a fixture at the YP and The M&M Club back in the day, has left us, all too soon at 62. When we first met he was dating Tommy the cook at M's and we were all so young, learning about life to a Disco beat — so long ago, but like yesterday in my heart. All these men and their contributions to our world, our community — I could not list here for

spacing issues... but because of them, our lives are sweeter.

Food Time — Oscar's Winner's Circle is now up and running at 3800 West Burnham Street 414-249-5701, open seven days a week 11 am — 11 pm. New and different burgers than the original Oscar's Pub & Grille at 1712 West Pierce Street (the old TAZZbah Bar & Grille) 414-810-1820 also open seven days a week, from 11:00 am. Good food, affordably priced, fresh quality and fresh selections — support your local businesses.

Happy Summer everyone and please remember it's the glamor, not the grammar as I remain Still Cordially yours,



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that made this happen. A quick nap and it was Sunday and Pride Parade! The weather wasn't in tune – but everyone else was and no veil of mist would stop us. Remember – Gay Pride Parade – rain or shine! And maybe the sun didn't shine – but everyone and everything else did! From Woody's to LVL to Club Charlies to This Is It, the rainbow could not be more colorful! Toby, Goldie, Jaisen, Chad, Casper, Nicole, Craig, Juanita, JD – what fun we all had! Loved Parade commentating once again – thank you Corey & George of LVL for offering me the Pride Parade gig. And if it's Sunday its show tunes with Brian at Charlies. (We've just celebrated four years of Sunday Fun Day Show Tunes at Club Charlies – the next one being Sunday, July 8th!!!) And all it cost was my voice! Yes, I know for many an answered prayer! LOL

Marcee Doherty Elst lit up The Kimpton Journeyman Hotel with "I'll Eat You Last" – an opus that revolves around super-movie agent Sue Mengers who ran Hollywood like her own little playground back in the 1970s. Everyone was in her stable from Streisand to Ryan O'Neal! This one woman vehicle was on Broadway, starring Tony Award Winner – Bette Midler! Theater RED teamed with Untitled Productions, making the magic happen! Last year, you may recall Theater RED partnered with the

Milwaukee Opera Theatre for an astounding concert version of "A Chorus Line". In a word flawless! I love seeing these grassroots pacts coming together making art and memories.

Speaking of theater – Jerold Fox a fashionable fixture at The Marcus Center for the Performing Arts has retired and exited stage left. I will miss his handsome demeanor.

Nick Giebel is departing his starring position at ARCW. A perfect Events Coordinator, learning under the divine Mary Hartwig. His career with the agency provided me a good friend – you will missed!

Eric Peterson – has also decided not only to step down from everything – but also leaving the Brew City, for Flagstaff, AZ. I hope old Route 66 brings all the happiness you are so entitled to! This man has given so much to this town – he literally is half the size leaving, than he was when we met. I truly am a better person for having known him. And most importantly – I Thank You!

I also have some very sad news to share, they say death comes in threes – and the following men have all left this earth this past month – actually – three days in a row! Jim (Tootsie) Ruff – a pillar of the AARP table of The Ball Game, always a gentleman, loved theater, a great raconteur and made Acapulco his honorary home! After a very successful career at NML

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Chill on the Hill, the summer music series in Milwaukee's Humboldt Park. How did that happen?

LA: They heard about my music through my website and reached out to me. We talked. I went to Bay View High School and Fritsche Middle School so I was back in my neighborhood. Then came PrideFest. It was amazing, opening for Jojo. I felt like a star. It was really crazy being on the Main

Stage in front of my LGBTQ family. It was a milestone in my book of performances... feeling like I didn't know I had to feel as an artist. Then came Minneapolis Pride and Sturgeon Bay just had its second annual Open Door Pride Festival. I'd done LGBT inclusion work there a couple of years ago. And I performed at the LGBT Jazz Night in Chicago at Reunion Chicago. That was beautiful. Next is Green Bay Pride

Alive in July. I haven't ever experienced their community so what better way than to perform there. I'm excited. And, maybe, (it's not confirmed yet), I'll be playing the Brew City Cigar Festival...my music's for everybody.

QUEST: Any other thoughts?
LA: I just want to close it out by repeating the Colors in Bloom message and telling people they are loved and worthy just as they are.

QUEST bids a fond farewell to Eric Peterson, Milwaukee activist

Milwaukee's LGBTQ community made history in Pride Month 2018, PrideFest had record attendance of 45,400+, the Pride Parade set a new record of almost 100 marching units, the Milwaukee Brewers hosted its first Pride Night and, by Mayoral Proclamation, June 23rd was declared "Eric Peterson Day". And while all are worthy of celebration, the last comes with a price. Eric Peterson, Cream City Foundation's (CCF) board of director's chairman, Saturday Softball Beer League (SSBL) Commissioner and Milwaukee Gay Sports Network (MGSN) President is leaving Milwaukee for a position in Flagstaff, Arizona, as Coconino County Public Affairs Director.

Peterson, 38, who came to Milwaukee in 2013 to become head of Government Affairs for Milwaukee County, quickly joined SSBL



and became its assistant commissioner in the same year. He would become its commissioner in 2015 and later, in 2017, the president of MGSN. He also joined CCF's board of directors in 2015 and became its chair in 2017.

Peterson's impact on all of those organizations

has been nothing short of historic. With an affable character and sincere conviction in our struggle for equality, social justice and civil rights, Peterson was an easy leader to follow. He motivated the engagement of those around him and brought about significant changes and creative inno-

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The Milwaukee Art Museum has Spanish Artist Francisco de Goya "Art of Etching" on view now through Sunday, September 9, The Bradley Family Gallery, very impressive etching to take in.

Are You all ready for another Milwaukee LGBTQ Community Center "Really Grand Friday" (RGF)? It's going to be hard to top the dazzling time we all had at Jay & Blake's in May. But come Friday, August 3 Robert Joehnk will roll out the lavender carpet to have you par take in a visit to his chic mansion. 3550 North Lake Drive. My dear friend Gino De Luca will be tickling the ivory keys on the piano as we escape the madness of the day to day and support a most worthwhile cause. 6:30 - 9:30 pm.

There will be two more RGF's in 2018 to turn out for: Friday, September 21 Luce Lighting 5407 West Vliet Street And on Friday, November 9 The Wiechmann's Penthouse 1040 North Cass Street Unit 902. What better way to close out the year than with Jim & Susee? You haven't lived, until you partied with these phenomenal assets to our world!

The 4th Annual Shepherd Express LGBTQ Progress Awards - Honoring Milwaukeeans who have made a difference, will be held on Thursday, August 9th The Renaissance Place 1451 North Prospect Avenue, hostess-ed by my sister-in-print Dear Ruthie. The Wisconsinites be Celebrated are: Tanya At-

Health and HIV Awareness - Planned Parenthood of Wisconsin, Mark Behar - Progress in Activism - Black & White Men Together, Tri-Cable Tonight, Milwaukee Gay People's Union - VD Testing, now known as The BestD Clinic, The Challenge Party - Progress in Philanthropy - Over the years, this exclusive one night a year gala has awarded over 1.1 million dollars to dozens of local organizations assisting the LGBTQ Community. Mark (ZA) Mariuccu - Progress in Business - 25 years of "Quest" - serving as owner, publisher, executive editor-in-chief, photographer, and ad sales, etc. ... doing everything it takes to keep a complimentary publication catering to the LGBTQ lifestyle and nightlife in circulation. Oh yeah and my boss! Carmen Murguia - Progress in Arts and Culture - a writer, activist, poet, published author, Latina, Lesbian, and the Voice for many. Tommy Salzsieder - Progress in Struggles for Equality - 40+ years ago, this maverick helped to launch SSBL - Saturday Softball Beer League proving sissies can be athletic! Tommy is still making home runs! DeShanda Williams and Adrienne Strelcheck - Progress In Youth Services - Driving the Street Beat Truck for PathFinders - late at night helping the lost, the weary, doing the ugly work in the trenches. Celeste Guse - Progress in Youth Activism - Helping form the Diversity Club at Shorewood Intermediate School, and

Gay - Straight Alliance of Shorewood High School - Just think where she will be in another decade or so. These people will get their just dessert - and for many of us - these are today's Heroes! Bravo! Hoping you all had a Pride-filled month of Pride! The weather may have been questionable - but not the fun, loyalty and enthusiasm everywhere I looked. Thank You PrideFest Committee, Pride Parade Organization and all our valued bars, restaurants, hotels - that sponsored, hosted, contributed in making June that much more lovely of a month. My Pride weekend started with HamBINGO at Hamburger Mary's on Wednesday, Thursday was the fabulous Gay Sports Network's Big Gay 5 K Walk/Run, where I did color commentating. Friday, I got to play The Kimpton Journeyman Hotel, with Gino De Luca - presenting our cabaret, Afterwards a very civilized cocktail party, high above the city, Saturday, always a blast doing the Leather Fetish Gear Show in the Dance Pavilion with Maple Veneer, Eddie always gets the most desirable Models - you all know who you are and the reaction you got from the SRO audience. WOW! As darkness took over - to the second level of the Harley area, where Brian Reinkober and Karen Valentine brought their ever-popular Sunday Fun Day Show Tunes alive on a Saturday night! Thank You Jay, Eric, and Adam and all

vation to the organizations he served. As its commissioner, he broadened the SSBL's mission to not only expand the range of Milwaukee LGBTQ sports but also their accessibility. He re-instituted SSBL's relationship with Miller Park's concession volunteer program to raise funds. The income (last year \$75,000) benefits both the organization and the volunteers. And, because SSBL has expanded its mission and is now the umbrella for organized Milwaukee gay athletics, any member of any sport may participate as a concession volunteer. His leadership of MGSN also

helped it develop as a major funder of LGBTQ sports and of CCF's scholarship program as well as expand its presence at PrideFest. With its attendance of over 150 and the presentation of the Mayoral Proclamation, Peterson's send-off party held at Woody's on June 23rd was a testament to the great bonds, friendships and incredible impact he made in his adopted community in just five years. While his departure will be a loss for Milwaukee in general and its LGBTQ community in particular, Peterson is confident in the status of both SSBL and MGSN. "MGSN is in

good hands and its board well positioned for transition as is SSBL under Jesse Walters who has taken over as commission. SSBL has a solid board and I am confident and impressed by its millennial leadership," Peterson said. Of course, he intends to play in the gay softball league in Phoenix and will stay in contact with SSBL, consulting as needed. QUEST wishes Eric all the best in his future endeavors in Arizona and extends its profound gratitude and thanks for his exemplary dedication and many positive contributions to Wisconsin's LGBTQ life.

PRIDE SHAPE THE FUTURE JULY 15, 2018

Fri July 13 Mr. & Miss Kenosha Pride Pageant @Club ICON, 9 p.m.

Sat July 14 Pre-Pride Party @Club ICON, 10 p.m.

Sun July 15 Kenosha Pride March @Library Park, 12 p.m.

Sun July 15 Pride Festival @Veterans Park, 1 p.m. - 9 p.m.



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After a steady diet of Coming-of-age films, Glenn and most, although not quite all, of the gentlemen of the monthly cinema circle were ready to enjoy the mash-up of the love story between Diego and Abel with director Tadeo Garcia's indictment of the prevailing attitude towards immigrants by President Trump; not forgetting the First Lady's own apparent apathy.

The actors playing Abel and Diego are attractive, have terrific chemistry and happily lack the chiseled Abs and blonde highlights so typical of gay leading men.

Glenn was especially intrigued by Nelson Rodriguez's wonderfully romantic Abel, a man determined to believe, eyes open, that love would conquer all yet knowing from what happened to his parents, just how fragile life can be and how important it is to live in the moment.

Just the facts...

A Place to Be is in English and has a running time of 113 minutes and is out on DVD with a SRP of \$24.99 Stereo Dolby Digital Rating: R Released: May 15 2018

It is difficult to imagine a more topical film for selection by Glenn and the gentlemen of a certain age who comprise the monthly cinema circle than Tadeo Garcia's *A Place to Be*.

As the gentlemen began drifting in, some were dispatched to the bar to conjure up pre-screening cocktails; the rest were tasked with assembling platters of fabulous Mexican nibbles which included Huevos Diablos, Mini Chicken Chimichangas and Grilled Pepper Poppers.

The conversation naturally turned to First Lady Melania Trump. Earlier that day Melania had somehow managed to grab the headlines away from her hubby thanks to her curious decision to wear an olive



A Place to Be

Zara jacket emblazoned with the message, "I REALLY DON'T CARE, DO U?" to a detention center for immigrant children separated from their families.

The liberal media was filled to the brim with righteous indignation and swift in taking First Lady Melania to task. None of the gentlemen appeared surprised that from President Trump and other conservatives came the usual cries of "Fake News."

So, it is pretty much business as usual in our nation's capital thinks Glenn as protesters at immigration rallies across the country this weekend held or wore slogans suggesting the message opposite of the First Lady: "I really do care."

Loyal Quest readers will have guessed that the debate over immigration will play a key role in *A Place to Be*.

At its heart, *A Place to Be* is one heck of a love story. Forget When Harry Met Sally, *A Place to Be* is all very "When Abel Met Diego."

In Tadeo Garcia's screenplay love, particularly true love, isn't always easy.

Too focused on his phone, Abel (literally) runs into Diego as well as a wayward \$6.00 cup of coffee. This delightfully amusing

scene is punctuated with a great deal of smiling on the part of both Abel (NELSON RODRIGUEZ) and Diego (ANDREW SAENZ); the kind of smiling that is awfully sweet to start with but which increasingly begins to look really quite painful.

Taking a brief break from smiling, Diego decides to write his name and number on Abel's arm but not as it happens with an indelible ink pen. Still, Abel's smile grows even bigger, rather less so when the info is seen to have been rinsed off after Abel's shower.

Out loud Glenn mused at the last time a trick wrote their name and number on Glenn's arm; No surprise then that Glenn didn't have a clue.

A chance encounter between Abel and Diego happens in an enchanting Chicago used book store is next, an encounter which finally brings the two lads together. For Abel, it is evident right from the start that he is truly, madly, deeply in love with Diego. In Glenn's day this would be known as "love at first sight" whilst it is known now as "insta-love."

Clearly newer isn't necessarily better.

At a delightful little café, Abel and Diego fi-

...

cordially yours

Happy birthday, America 242 years old and still trudging along...

Its summer let's escape into fun with another visit from *Cordially yours*.

Summerfest is in full bloom and lighting up our lakefront. Where else can you go and hear music, eat, drink and observe the best people watching for the season? This internationally revered song soiree runs through Sunday, July 8th (closed Monday, July 2). This summer commemorates 51 years of this institution of entertainment.

If you get a chance please

read my "pal" Karen Valentine's blog on Summerfest

- "Summerfest Makes Me Smile".

Speaking of lighting up the lakefront, there is a move out there to light up

the Hoan Bridge... wouldn't that make our dynamic skyline that more dazzling?

And don't fret if Summerfest isn't long enough for you, Milwaukee has a summer of festivals, including: Bastille Days July 12 - 15, in the heart of East Town, make sure to visit This Is It, now in their 50th year of serving the Community. You love Jazz in the Park every Thursday - come feel the French flair ...Festa Italiana July 20, 21, 22 and GermanFest July 27, 28, 29, these two are held at our luscious lakefront.

The Sunset Playhouse of Elm Grove has a modern day side splitter with "The Producers" in the Furlon Auditorium. Thursday, July

12 - Sunday, August 5 - these days we can all use a good, hearty laugh and no one knows how to tickle that old funny bone like Mel Brooks.

My friends of the Cream City Foundation (CCF) are planning their annual to-do... "Summer Social" formerly known as "My Best Friend is Straight" taking place on Tuesday, July 24. At The South Shore Terrace 2900 South Shore Drive 6:00 pm, Program with Live Appeal 7:00 pm, 8:00 pm the Silent Auction concludes. To get your reservation in, please call: 414-225-0244 and speak with Jesse Allen, he gives good phone. I so love this sensational soiree, full disclosure, I have my own fund with CCF, The Valentine Fund for Arts and Culture, the lion share goes annually to underwriting the Art Therapy Program at the AIDS Resource Center of Wisconsin (ARCW). You too can have your own Fund - if



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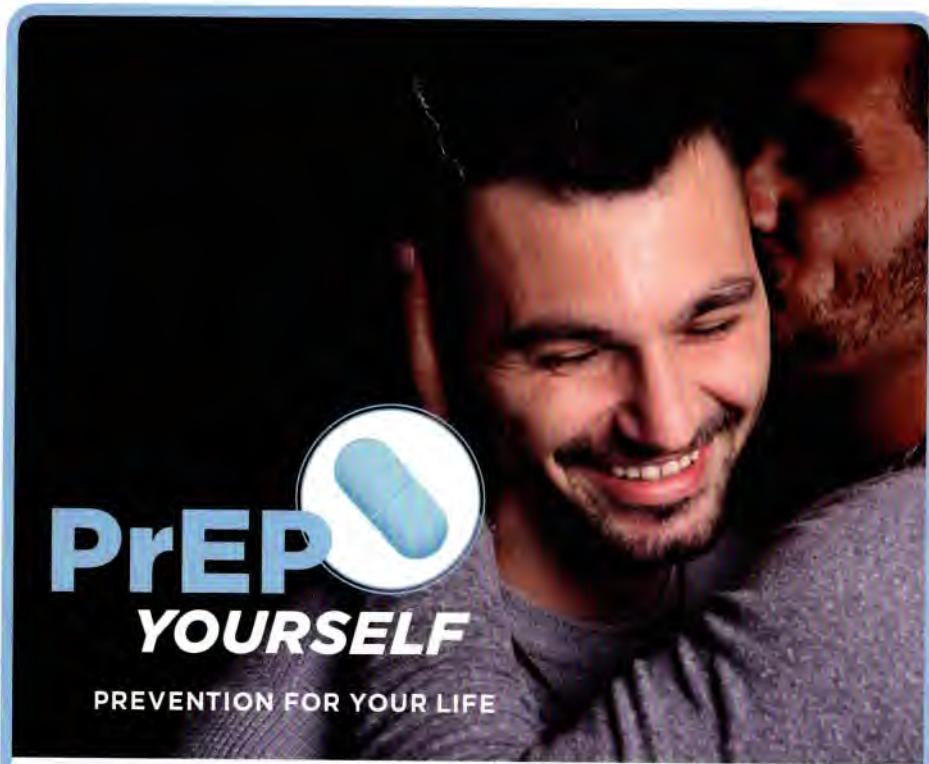
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nally have the opportunity to get to know each other.

Abel reveals that both of his parents died when he was quite young; a grandmother raised Abel until she died when Abel was 17 years old. Then Abel was truly alone, except for the fact there seems to be an older sister introduced into the narrative.

Probably Glenn missed some crucial plot point, again.

Abel is a social worker who works for a Gay Rights or-

ganization mentoring young men; it is a job for which Abel is justifiably proud, although one which Diego is curiously quite dismissive.

Diego is an auto mechanic who lives with his mother in a basement flat not nearly as private as Abel is led to believe. He's also undocumented alien, despite having lived in the United States since the age of six.

This last bit of information is not shared with Abel until, well...until Diego's real

mother, who lives in Mexico, wishes to see her son before she dies.

A blazing row follows but Abel is nothing if not pragmatic. Deeply hurt from this apparent lack of trust on Diego's part, he slaps a smile back on his face, admittedly one which is perhaps slightly askew and gets on with things which in this instance mean that he is all on board about going to Mexico with Diego, no matter the risk.

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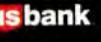


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