For my generation, the epidemic of HIV and AIDS has been a lifelong reality—always known, always a possibility, and often forgotten. And for this reason I believe it’s vital that we tell the stories of the people for whom HIV and AIDS became a newfound horror—an absolute terror that blew out their lives apart, but the lives of everyone they’d ever been in sexual contact with.

Scottish theatre company, Civil Disobedience, clearly has the same thoughts and is staging two performances of Larry Kramer’s play ‘The Normal Heart’ on World AIDS Day to benefit Waverley Care, an HIV and Hep C charity based in Edinburgh. Kramer’s play was a semi-autobiographical tragedy set in 1980’s New York, whose main character is Ned—a young gay guy fighting an acknowledgement of the fast-growing HIV epidemic. Ned battles to get US authorities to acknowledge the seriousness of the disease, while he struggles to come to terms with the deterioration of his lover and friends.

I met up with Director of the play, Barry Woods, who spoke passionately about the production, which he first directed 10 years ago in Fife. Barry explained that the HIV Comeback Tour, a Scottish HIV awareness campaign launched in 2006, got him thinking again about the play, and upon re-reading the script, he realised that nothing had changed. People are still being infected, with 2010 producing the highest levels of new infections since 1982! People still associate HIV and AIDS with Africa, or believe that they can just take a pill and it will all be OK.

Barry is excited about the cast, who have been chosen from over 300 applications. The playwright himself, Larry Kramer, has agreed to come on board. Kramer has been taking part in press interviews from his home in Connecticut—including a piece for the Sunday Herald. This is a production which must not be missed—so show your support and order tickets now! ‘The Normal Heart’ is to be staged at the National Museum of Scotland, Chambers Street, with two performances conveniently timed at 2.30pm and 7.30pm on Sat 1st Dec only. Tickets are available from Civil Disobedience at a minimum donation of £10 with all proceeds going to Waverley Care. To buy tickets, or for more information, Tel: 0131-477 4154 or E-mail: barry@thenormalheart.com, or go to: www.thenormalheart.com

Jodie Fleming

Read about it in ScotsGay Scene Edition 78a please...
Safer Sex for Women

Lesbians are universally believed to be ‘low risk’ when it comes to sexual health. This is however a myth! So as women, we have to empower ourselves with the facts to keep ourselves safe.

The term ‘safe sex’ is actually very misleading, because the only real ‘safe’ activity is where you are at no risk of becoming infected with HIV or other STIs – and this would be through non-contactor sex. It’s vital that precautions be taken. These are however things you can do to protect yourself.

Even though sex between women has a reduced likelihood of transmitting HIV and other infections, these other infections, these are still passed through sex. And remember – when it comes to reducing the risk of infection, it’s as important to protect yourself as it is to protect your partner.

So unless you’ve both been tested recently, or are STI-free, there’s a risk of contracting one of the following:

- Oral Sex/Rimming
- Masturbation
- Tribadism
- Fingers and Fists
- Tongue

Some lesbian sexual practices are risky

- Masturbation: this is a fun and safe way to have an orgasm. But if you touch someone else before or after touching yourself, wash your hands with a soap and hand sanitiser.
- Tribadism: rubbing genitalia against (friction)
- Oral Sex: these are high risks of STIs from this type of activity – other than knowing that both you and your partner are STI-free.
- Fingers and Fists: this can be avoided by using a dental dam or a condom cut into a square.
- Tongue: there’s a risk of contracting thrush, gonorrhoea or HIV. This can be avoided by using a dental dam or a condom cut into a square.

The following are some of the more common sexually transmitted infections:

- Throat – most common – causes sexual problems, sexual dysfunction and discharge
- Bacterial Vaginosis – causes discharge
- Genital Warts – caused by viruses – passed by touching or sharing sex toys
- Trichomonas vaginalis – causes a burning, itching sensation and discharge
- Herpes – painful sores on and around the vagina/ anus/mouth – passed by touching or sharing sex toys
- Shingles – very painful – passed through skin contact
- Chlamydia/Gonorrhoea – no symptoms – passed mainly through sharing sex toys
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- HIV – the virus that causes AIDS is in the blood, sexual fluid and breast milk of a woman with HIV, so you are at risk if you are at risk of any of these fluids.

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Edinburgh

It's almost that time again... World AIDS Day is rapidly approaching! Often forgotten in the rush to Xmas, this is a time of poignant memories for some. For others, a celebration of those still with us as a result of medical progressions. It’s also a time to celebrate the huge successes of activism over the last 23 years, which has raised awareness of HIV and AIDS as well as dispelling the stigma and stereotyping surrounding it.

Very fittingly, the theme for World AIDS Day this year is ‘Understanding Through Communication’. This year WAD is particularly special as it’s 20 years old! And in recognition of this special day, there are a plethora of activities in Edinburgh to get involved in, whether it be to solemnly remember loved ones or to celebrate progress.

A Normal Heart - National Museum of Scotland, Chambers Street
Sat 1st Dec 2007 - 2.30pm and 7.30pm
Tickets: Alison Flintham on 0131-226 2206
(jinus@waverleycare.org)

Celebrate, Reflect and Remember at St. John's Church, Princes Street
Annual World AIDS Day event to celebrate the lives of people living with HIV and to remember those who have died. Featuring the Loud and Proud LGBT Choir
Sat 1st Dec 2007 - 4pm – 5.30pm
Tickets: Martin Chatterley on 0131-441 6989 (Dialogue@waverleycare.org)

Lovedly - Liquid Rooms
Sat 1st Dec 2007 - 10.30pm – 4am
Theme: “Heaven Sent” Dress Code: saints & angels, nuns & monks, white & silver
Café Havana - World AIDS Day After Party (all funds raised to Waverley Care)
Sun 2nd Dec 2007
Cabaret with Miss Coco Chanel and friends. Raffle with great prizes!

If anyone has prizes they can donate for Habana’s WAD Raffles, please contact the venue with more info.

The red ribbon became a symbol of AIDS awareness in 1991, and wearing one is a simple and powerful way to challenge the stigma and prejudice surrounding HIV and AIDS. And to further commemorate the occasion, the sumptuous chocalatier, Plaisir du Chocolat on the Royal Mile, have produced a Tartan Ribbon Chocolate exclusive to Waverley Care!

If commemorating World AIDS Day gives you a desire for further action, why not join Waverley care as a volunteer? If you’re compassionate, patient and want to make a difference, full training will be given as you become a member of their buddy system. Volunteers provide social, practical and emotional support to people living with HIV. For further details on volunteer opportunities with Waverley Care, call 0131-312 9982.

Elsewhere on the scene, for all you girls with Velver withdrawal symptoms, you’ll be pleased to hear their short sabbatical is over now! Velver’s tour of Edinburgh makes its next stop at The Ark on Waterloo Place, on Sat 29th Dec. Very conveniently off Princes Street, this venue describes itself as “eart-hulu-loud with vintage soul!” From 10pm-4am, this special night has a ‘Drag King’ theme. And if you’re not the most creative in the world- ‘Dancing with the Stars’- I’m sure you can give them a run for their money! They will however be returning with a Cabaret with Miss Coco Chanel and friends. (all funds raised to Waverley Care)

Biggest news on the scene this month is that Planet Out is up for sale. Word on the street is that the deal includes 7 pre-staging members of staff, so thankfully it doesn’t look like faces are going to change, though I’m thinking of buying it just so I can ban punk clothing from behind the bar.

Hare GHQ, rang me and gave me a glimpse of being a gay-friendly venue quicker than you could say ‘feminised bridge’! After reports of gay clubbers being turned away from the venue on the premise that it ‘ain’t gay until later on’, I took my concerns to the upper management at Kingfelter Leslie. To date, they still haven’t got back to me. I wonder what the Licensing Board would think in the event of anyone else being turned away from GHQ on the basis of being gay, please refer them to the Sexual Orientation (Prohibition of Goods and Services) legislation which says this discrimination is actually illegal.

So we’ve got a month left until the fairtime that is Xmas is over! I guess I’m not the only one already fed up with the sound of carols ringing in my ears, and 3-for-2 cheap tat jumping out from every store shelf and window! Never mind mulled wine - make mine a double vodka, thank you very much! And as for mince pies… they’re just maggots in my tea!等等……
Well here we are again – oh joy of joys!! You may or may not have noticed, you may or may not care but my alter-ego Gary La Blonde is dead (thank you to those who staggered along to the memorial in Bonneth). Long live the re-born Gary Glamourouso, and let us never speak of pervide again…… Anyhow enough on the subject of that party where and let’s get back to me, the smarter, funnier and more popular one (and yes that is sacarn ladies). Here we go again my little Xmas crackers, the festive party season is fast approaching - so get your seasonal pre-arranged and “Get Your Lift Off”!!

After a rather hectic month for us, our heads are entirely pounding from all the decadent debauchery and down right nasty nights out. I am actually unsure quite how we’ve going to hold ourselves together long enough to finish this. We love our readers almost as much as we love a free drinkie po! Ok ok enough, I hear you already! What’s first on our seasonal social calendar of soreness and shingles I hear you ask……

Utter Gutter is holding festive themed madness on Sat 8th Dec. Some may say £10 entry as a bit steep, but it’s pretty much worth every penny with the usual mix of homo electro, disco sleaze and cock pop and as an added incentive (as if you really need much persuasion……) they are giving out CDs as a Xmas present to the first hundred partygoers through the door! Race you for them.

The Big Gay Faum Party will be held at Club Clinic (facing Santini’s and Revolver, directly under the Italian Centre) on Sat 8th Dec. It’s promising to be one of the best nights of the party season, with a kick ass DJ line up and a range of “interesting” party games to get you rocking! Club Clinic is now open on Sun, Mon, Tue and Wed! Hurrah for this we say, lots of trips to the Clinic will keep us all happy and healthy.

A favourite of ours is Death Discos an unmissable monthly fiesta. They celebrated their 5th birthdays in Nov, and are now planning an XXXMas Party on Sat 15th Dec. It’ll be a raucous affair, with the usual up-for-it mood and the best underground DJs from across Europe. For those of you curious as to when the doors of disco will finally re-open, we have no idea! Though the word on the street is it will be open for Dec, and Pop Idol Winner (and a BB favourite in Glasgow) Michelle McManners will be opening the disco doors for us (cock! I never told you this but if you take a double take at Miss Shivey you may notice a slight resemblance to old Chele Me). Also, watch out for promotions for their McManus Drub Dols contests where the winner will be decided by txt voting, and all proceeds dedicated to charity funds. Come on ladies, it can be as good to give as to receive! So be generous, and you never know what you might get back.

The Polo Lounge, a favourite haunt of ours, is stil open for Dec, and Pop Idol Winner (and from the Beti Hutton seal of approval). The Big Joint in South Street, Edinburgh. Runs regular clubs at The Art School, Renfrew Street. Monday Night Open every Wed, main entrance at 9pm-3am. Scotland’s oldest gay disco. £5 entry after 11pm. Tennes and Tiers for December. They’ll be packing a Christmas Motherload. 350 Sauchiehall Street. Tel: 0141-352 6900. Fax: 0141-332 3226. Pay the festive price of £3 to get in at any time. 18+.

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It’s fantastic that the North of Scotland now has its own wee spot in this mag. There are many LGBT people living far up north, and it’s important that we become more visible and express our voice. So thanksto and around Inverness, but allover the aremany LGBT people live far up North, now has its own wee spot in this mag. There are many LGBT people who lurk hotspots of lesbian, gay, bisexual and transgender people who are identified as gay, bisexual and transgender, and their partners are welcome, as well as those who identify as 6pm, Thu 13th Dec, the LGBT Carol Service on Sat 15th Dec the LGBT Social Group meeting on Tue 4th Dec at 7.30pm, and the LGBT Youth social drop-in on Sun 8th Dec from 10am-2pm. Dundee University’s LGBT Society is still going strong. If you want to know more, go to www.diversitay.org.uk. Dundee University’s LGBT Society is still going strong. If you want to know more, go to www.diversitay.org.uk.

Highland Pride Ball

Social Group

Day themed cards.

chocolates, photographs and World AIDS Day giving out free condoms, dams, lube and ribbons and will be on hand to answer all your questions. Diversitay’s latest newsletter is out this month and can be picked up at the small places. Their phone line is open from 7-9pm every Monday, and they hold chillout evenings on the first Wed of the month at Noisy Parkers. Diversitay’s AGM will be held in December. For more info, call them visit the website (www.diversitay.org.uk).

Dundee University’s LGBT Society is still going strong. If you want to know more, go to www.diversitay.org.uk. They are actively encouraging students from Aberystwyth and Dundee University to come along.

well, that’s all for our first feature – watch this space for further Highland updates!
Aberdeen

obar dheadhainn

It has been a busy old year for everyone on and off the scene in Aberdeen. From Foundation to Terence Higgins Trust, from Cheer to Teraz, we have all been buzzing trying to keep the LGBT community as the area occupied.

The first event happening for World AIDS Day is the human red ribbon being held on Fri 30th Nov. Terrence Higgins Trust Grampian are looking for as many people as possible to come along to the Kings College Playing Field in Old Aberdeen to be part of this. Red T-shirts will be supplied, as will soup to warm you up and fire light bulbs while stocks are available. Huge thanks to Grampian Fire & Rescue for supplying a cherry picker, to allow aerial photos to be taken on the day.

The main event on Sat 1st Dec is the World AIDS Day Galahad being held at Foundation from 8pm. Dance along to the Dance McCalvay Galahad band, and win prizes supplied by local businesses. These include meal vouchers for Tiger Tiger, Hair Styling from Hair stand Nelly and many more. Tickets are £7 (£5 concession) and are available from The Hub at Aberdeen University, NHS Healthpoint at Aberdeen Market, Foundation Nightclub and also the Terrence Higgins Trust office.

A few of us from THT are currently going through radio training to get a show on the new community radio station for Aberdeen, SHMU FM 99.8. We are hoping to be good enough to get on air by early Dec, so keep an eye out for more news on an LGBT radio show for your local area. If you want more info or want to be a guest once we are on air, drop me an e-mail.

The busiest month of the year is now upon Aberdeen. Everyone is trotting drunk from works’ parties to the venues in town… and you will not be disappointed this year, as venues have less plastic!!

Cheerz are holding a Scottie Pride night… see the leaf on Fri 30th Nov! This is a night for all people proud of being Scottie, or who are living straying in Scotland! The bar and club will be decorated in flags and all things Scottish… Will many be getting his legs out? Will Xmas’s dress making skills be going to use again… just have to wait and see! Cheerz also has some themed nights throughout Dec leading up to Xmas. The Hallie’en Night was a great success, and Cheerz would like to thank everyone for running up and getting into the spirit of the festivities! Check out their site on www.cheerzbar.net or interact with the bar on facebook at www.facebook.com/CheerzBar

As well as the WAD Galahad, Foundation in Dec… freedrinksusuallygetyour tunes on and off the scene in Aberdeen. From Foundation to Terence Higgins Trust, from Cheer to Teraz, we have all been buzzing trying to keep the LGBT community as the area occupied.

The universities and colleges have now been back for a couple of months, and the societies have all had their first events. The newest kid on the block in the world of LGBT Societies is Aberdeen College. The LGBT officer there is Alan Mackay, if you have any queries regarding LGBT issues within the college you can drop Alan an E-mail: smackay@abdn.ac.uk or leave messages for him via the college reception.

RGU LGBT is planning a trip to Edinburgh later one on the month, as well as the weekly meetings. The RGU Society has recently regrouped and the new committee is in place. For more information drop Geoff an E-mail to lgbt@shmu.ac.uk on the gay scene in Edinburgh. Visit the AB-FAB online blog http://nightlifeblogs.com to find out more and get involved.

Moray News

The Moray LGBT Group for under 26’s is taking a break in Dec and will be back in Jan. For more info on the group, drop me an E-mail: andi@whts.org.uk or see www.lgbt.org.uk/moray/ I would also like to give a HUGE welcome to Agnes Bos from THT Highland, who is now writing the news for the bleak North… I have been assured it is not that bad!!!

Everybody, have a fantastic Xmas and New Year. And when you’re looking at all those festive snaps taken over the festive season, snap them to me and I’ll see if we can get them published!

Attention to all gay couples and those considering Civil Partnership

1. Do you understand the rights and obligations involved in Civil Partnership?
2. Do you understand the implications to your relationship of the Family Law Act 2000?
3. Do you think that a Cohabitation Agreement might suit your circumstances?
4. Do you understand what that can mean?

If you don’t know the answers, I do and I’ll be happy to help you make the right decisions for you. Call Donald Reid now for our FREE booklet, quoting ref: GSS

Tel: 0131 228 2828 or E-mail: dr@vmh.co.uk