

# Gay & Lesbian

Edited by Beth Greenfield  
gay@timeoutny.com



**TURN THE BEADS AROUND**  
Mark Sam Rosenthal puts his own twist on the Tennessee Williams character in *Blanche Survives Katrina in a FEMA Trailer Named Desire*.

**FRINGE FESTIVAL**  
For TONY's exhaustive coverage of this year's New York International Fringe Festival, go to [timeoutnewyork.com/fringefest08](http://timeoutnewyork.com/fringefest08)

## Just a stage?

The Fringe Festival presents a slew of shows from gay perspectives.  
By **Beth Greenfield**

While the New York International Fringe Festival is not officially a queer-theater fest, you'd be forgiven for mistaking it for one. It's spawned at least five GLAAD Media Award nominees in recent years. And this year's crop brings more than 50 gay-themed or gay-appealing shows (such as the much-anticipated *Becoming Britney* and *Tim Gunn's Podcast*) to the various stages of the festival, which will enter its 12th year when it kicks off on Friday 8. According to Elena K. Holy, Fringe Fest producing artistic director and cofounder, it's a perfect fit.

"I think it's a natural home for all inventive and personal experimental theater," she says, "and I'm particularly proud that we're a home for queer theater of all kinds." A dozen years ago, when the festival

began, she added, "I think there was more of an automatic labeling, for lack of a better word, of the gay plays. Now, even though there's more work that can be categorized that way, it's just seen as theater."

That may be true—but hey, we kind of like to label sometimes. And so, in an effort to point you in the right direction, here are six queer highlights that you won't want to miss.

### **The October Crisis (to Laura)** Premieres Fri 8 at 9:30pm

"This is the story of a nightclub singer that I invented named Marguerite Stone," explains playwright Alejandro Morales about his third Fringe Fest show, directed by Scott Ebersold, which follows the Cuban singer's decision to choose her career over her family. Years later, in 1962, she is confronted by her grown son, who is gay but in the closet, and Morales attempts to tell his story in a way that honors old-school closet tales but also gives them new life. "I wanted to make his

struggle feel more human and not so stereotypical," he says.

### **Perez Hilton Saves the Universe (or at Least the Greater Los Angeles Area): The Musical** Premieres Sat 9 at noon

Poised to be the big gay hit of the festival, this pop-infused musical has plenty going for it: the name *Perez Hilton*, for one, and, for two, a wacky plot twist that has the famed gossip blogger dealing with snafus involving everyone from Islamic terrorists to Kathy Griffin. That's not to mention the team of talents behind the show, including local comic Randy Blair.

### **XY(T)** Premieres Sat 9 at 5:30pm

Kestryl Cael Lowrey draws from both his own experiences as a "transgender butch" and those of others in the trans community to delve into questions about gender expectations. "I zoom in on the way we think about what a man is and how this ideal category is

constructed," he explains. "It also looks at what it's like for anyone who's never quite been 'man enough' or 'woman enough.'" But the show promises way more than personal angst. "I have a lot of fun with it," Lowrey says. "It's not like I'm ripping out a piece of my heart and holding it dripping in my hand."

### **Blanche Survives Katrina in a FEMA Trailer Named Desire** Premieres Sat 9 at 7:15pm

Here's something we bet you've never pondered: What would Blanche DuBois surviving Hurricane Katrina have looked like? Would her "kindness of strangers" philosophy have been abandoned? Writer and performer Mark Sam Rosenthal gives his interpretation in this sure-to-be campy, clever and possibly heart-wrenching blend of politics and over-the-top drama. "It's like he was born to play Blanche," says Holy.

### **Raised by Lesbians** Premieres Sat 9 at 11pm

This is the legacy of playwright Leah Ryan, who died of cancer in June. "The [theater] company wrote while Leah was in the hospital to say that she and her family wanted the show to go on," Holy says. And now, with direction by Dev Bondarin, Ryan leaves behind her a tale that is essentially about being a teenager, and the universality of having parents—gay or not—that make a 16-year-old cringe.

### **III** Premieres Wed 13 at 4:15pm

"This show is so beautiful," Holy says. "It's one of our pieces that falls into the a-glimpse-of-New York category." It's the true story, written and directed by Joe Salvatore, of a loving, long-term ménage à trois among photographer George Platt Lynes, writer Glenway Wescott and Monroe Wheeler, who served as MoMA's director of exhibitions and publications in the 1940s. Salvatore had some extraordinary documents to draw upon, including the carbon copies of letters that the three men wrote to one another. "It's emblematic of the fact that they knew they were living an extraordinary existence," Holy adds.

*The New York International Fringe Festival runs Fri 8 through Aug 24. A party, with previews of gay highlights, is Sun 10 at Vlada. See listings and It's Here, It's Queer, and visit [fringenyc.org](http://fringenyc.org) for more shouttimes.*