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# nightspots

weekly nightlife section in



Jake Shears.  
Photo by Ivan Bideac

## BOOKS

## Shears' genius: Musician on memoir 'Boys Keep Swinging'

BY OWEN KEEHNEN

These days, Jake Shears is busier than ever.

In addition to starring as Charlie Price in *Kinky Boots* on Broadway, he has an upcoming album in the works, and also recently released the frank, sexy, and very engrossing memoir, *Boys Keep Swinging*. In the new book, Shears chronicles his youth and life as an outsider, his struggle as an artist in New York City circa the millennium and his eventual success as frontman of the glam-rock band Scissor Sisters.

**Windy City Times:** Congrats on *Kinky Boots* on Broadway, your upcoming album and the new memoir, *Boys Keep Swinging*.

Jake Shears: Thank you!

**WCT:** What made it the right time to write your book?

JS: The idea came at a perfect time, when I was headed to New Orleans for awhile, and needed something to do to keep me busy. Also, the main period that the book covers is the early 2000's in NYC, which is something that I felt hadn't been written about that much yet.

**WCT:** In the book you discuss being bullied and coming to terms with your sexuality. What do you consider the most crucial element in your transformation from Arizona kid Jason Sellards to glam rocker/Broadway star Jake Shears?

JS: The most crucial element was New York City itself. I had been searching for a long time for a place that gave me the freedom that I really longed for. I landed here when I was 20, which was the perfect time. New York is always a little hard going, but my appetites were being satiated

in a new way.

**WCT:** In your memoir you talk about being mentored by Dan Savage and Terry Miller after moving to Seattle for school. What was the most important thing they taught you in that role?

JS: I think the best thing about Dan and Terry coming into my life when they did, was that it made me feel like I had an intellectual value. That the stuff I cared about was important. They made me feel like I was actually a special person, and that one day, I could be as interesting as I found they were.

**WCT:** You also dated Anderson Cooper for a couple months back in the early 2000s. Do you have a favorite AC story?

JS: Neither of us will ever forget when he told me that I was definitely going to have to face reality and get a real job. We still laugh about it.

**WCT:** In *Boys Keep Swinging* you talk a lot about your early years in New York City—working as a go-go dancer, the clubs, starting to perform, etc. What was it about the city and the era that made it the perfect time and place for you?

JS: It was still possible to get by in NYC on not a lot of money. I think that's important for anybody who is creative, starting out. I think certain young people nowadays might even be better off in other cities seeing as how cost prohibitive NYC has gotten. The city still had some grit to it, and I loved the feeling that the possibilities were endless.

**WCT:** Is there a band or artist your fans

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## PERFORMANCE

## '9 to 5' in the age of #MeToo: Firebrand runs problematic play

BY KAREN TOPHAM

This is the era of #MeToo, Time's Up and many other "woke" movements that are changing the zeitgeist of the country, especially where women are concerned. Sexual harassment is no longer tolerated; women are, more and more, speaking up for themselves.

Into this moment in time, Harmony France of Firebrand Theatre (the company that gave us *Lizzie* this winter and brands itself as a truly feminist organization) has chosen for her next project the musical version of *9 to 5*, a movie that (while certainly empowering) is problematic in its antiquated portrayal of office sexual politics. I asked France what this play brought to the table at this time.

"For me," she said, "it's always been a kind of dated piece. But after the election and the

much is still the same."

Hamilton said that the most difficult part for her is handling the women-on-women sexism in the show.

"We have to be careful not to victim blame and say that any way of being a woman or being feminine is wrong. What's wrong is pushing others to the outskirts where we don't feel like we have an ally. That's the sad part of *Doralee*: she's getting it from both sides. It's messed up but it's something that happens."

This is why France is working to downplay the harassment humor of the show.

"The script is what it is, and it's still going to be a comedy, but we're definitely not going to play that up especially with the number of women who face harassment in workplaces all over America. So much is because we have been conditioned to believe we need to compete with one



Anne Sheridan Smith, Shariiese Hamilton and Sara Reinicke (from left).  
Photo courtesy of Firebrand Theatre

#metoo and Time's Up movements, I find it isn't that dated at all. We haven't come as far as we thought we had."

France said that, as with many other movies and TV shows she enjoyed growing up, there are things in *9 to 5* that she just wasn't aware of at the time. "We're at an age when a lot of questioning is going on. But it's still a base story that everyone can relate to: we've all worked someplace where we've experienced discrimination, especially women and people of color."

Actress Shariiese Hamilton—who plays *Doralee*, the *Dolly Parton* character—agreed.

"I remember overhearing when I was bartending a man saying he was aghast because: you're telling me that a guy is going to lose his job because he whistled at a woman at work and there was just a bit of friendly flirting? And I was like, 'Yeah man.' There were some terrible things happening to women, but what [the women in the movie] are doing is a huge step. It WAS a movement for women. It's hard to look at because so

another; it's still rooted in the patriarchy. One of the great things here is that they realize that they don't have to compete and become allies."

Anne Sheridan Smith, who plays *Violet* in Firebrand's production, also said that France is working to make sure that the experience is uplifting for women.

She said that the show will be "a little bit more layered, a little bit more complex than [audiences expect], and that's exciting. Some audiences will walk in expecting something fun, kitschy, and dated because they love the film and actors, but they might find themselves cringing more than they expected to. In a fun and light-hearted way we are coming at something much more serious than perceptions used to be. We're kind of fed up in society; there is less tolerance for that now."

Hamilton sees that element as well.

"It's a comedy so we're not going to stare at the audience and say 'SHAME, don't laugh at this.' It's the job of comedy sometimes to get people to

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# the DISH

Weekly Dining Guide in  
WINDY CITY TIMES

## SAVOR

### Tied House; Dining Out for Life

BY ANDREW DAVIS

Rarely will you see a restaurant revamp as total as the one at **Tied House** (3157 N. Southport Ave.; <https://www.tiedhousechicago.com/>).

Next door to the popular spot Schubert's, Tied House occupies the spot where Harmony Grill used to be—and it features a more upscale decor (including a huge fireplace in the outdoor patio area) and cuisine.

As with many Chicago restaurants, there is history steeped in this spot. A “tied house” used to sell beverages connected with a particular brewery in exchange for a fee (so they were “tied” to said brewery)—with many local spots connected to Milwaukee-based Schlitz. Tied House still features a Schlitz facade.

The restaurant, which opened in late February,



**Tied House Executive Chef Debbie Gold.**  
PR photo

is spacious and has a lot of “clean lines,” as they would say. There are 60 feet of sliding doors and a 25-foot bar in this 12,000-square-foot spot (including the full basement).

And the staff! Former Everest Pastry Chef Debbie Gold is the executive chef of Tied House, and Ryan Carbone (formerly of Dusek's) and Chuck Woods (who used to work at Girl and the Goat) are the sous chefs.. (By the way, according to a widely circulated report, women represent only 19 percent of chefs and 7 percent of head chefs across the culinary world—which is absolutely shameful.)

As for the cuisine and service, they're both pretty impressive at this high end-yet-accessible restaurant. (Our server, who resembled Mark Consuelos, was extremely affable and made sure every patron's need was tended to—even if it

was finding out a hashtag or keeping water in an ice bucket.)

Even the bread service was a step above that of most restaurants. Guests can select from Parker House rolls, seeded rye bread or honey-oat porridge bread that can come with bone-marrow butter, chicken-liver mousse, green-tomato marmalade, whipped lardo or creme fraiche honeycomb in addition to the dairy butter.

The rest of the menu is divided into “Vegetable,” “Sea” and “Land.” However, there is nothing standard beyond those category names. For example, one selection in the first category is maitake mushroom, a delicious and earthy dish that comes with farm egg, broth and shoyu. (Yes, I know a mushroom isn't technically considered a vegetable, but in any event...)

Other dishes are just as enticing and complex. My friend loved her beeswax-aged mackerel, which came with leek, yellow beet, horseradish and duck sauce. I chose the milk-braised pork (with cabbage, salsify and apple) and it was absolutely delicious—although it was a bit too fatty for me. (A little fat goes a long way.) And don't go anywhere without trying the chocolate mousse, which comes with cocoa nibs; the deconstructed wedding cake, to me, was merely okay.

Among some of the other dishes I'm dying to try on a return visit are the monkfish, lamb rack and short rib. However, with a spring menu likely to debut within the next month, some of these items may not be around too long—or, simply,

some of the vegetables that accompany them may change.

One other note: If you dare, you can try a dive-bar special here: a shot of Malort. Rarely does anyone have anything good to say about this drink—and I can add my name to that list. However, I can say that I tried it (and it was followed by my first—and last—“Malort face”). However, the actual cocktail I got (and they're numbered one through six) was very tasty.

If you hear about Tied House reaping awards within a year, don't be surprised.

#### Dining Out for Life

The annual event known as **Dining Out for Life Chicago** will take place Thursday, April 26.

This year, up to 75 local restaurants (including Big Chicks, Urban Belly, Honey Butter Fried Chicken, The Dearborn and others) will donate all or a portion of their proceeds to HIV/AIDS-service organization TPAN (Test Positive Aware Network). The event returns to Chicago after a three-year absence.

Dining Out For Life started in 1991 and is now an international fundraising event raising awareness and over \$4.2 million in vital funds and for those affected by and vulnerable to HIV/AIDS. See <https://www.diningoutforlife.com/chicago>.

**Note: Restaurant profiles/events are based on invitations arranged from restaurants and/or firms.**



## BIG CHICKS

Get into the groove of Madonna night.

Photos by Jerry Nunn

## SHEARS from page 26

would be surprised to hear was a musical inspiration to you?

JS: Queens of the Stone Age remains one of my favorite bands of all time. I actually dedicated my book to Josh Homme and his wife, Brody Dalle. Their records are so gorgeous and glam and heavy. One of the new songs on my record, *The Bruiser*, is definitely influenced.

**WCT: Boys Keep Swinging is so well-written. I'm curious as to what book or books have influenced you the most as a person and an artist?**

JS: I am a massive reader and a book collector. Favorite writers are Jennifer Egan, Jeff Vandermeer, Haruki Murakami, Nick Cutter, Joe Hill, Nicholson Baker, Patrick McGrath, Sarah Waters, Tom Spanbauer, Donald Ray Pollack, Patrick DeWitt [and] Kelly Link, to name a handful.

**WCT: As someone who has been described as an exhibitionist, was there any part of your life that you were especially hesitant to share in the book?**

JS: The whole thing. I had a huge amount of anxiety when this book was turned in and as it has come out. Now that people are reading it and liking it, I feel a lot more calmed, but I felt a little vulnerable putting that much personal information into the world.

**WCT: With your upcoming solo album, how did the autonomy of being able to do what you wanted compare to the collaborative energy of working with the band?**

JS: It was still a very collaborative experience. But it was extremely liberating knowing that it's

only my name on it, and knowing that I'm the only person I really needed to please making it. I think it's going to prove to be one of my best pieces of music work in a long time.

**WCT: Do you think your role as an out musician and artist has changed in the Trump era?**

JS: I feel that my role as a musician is the same that it always has been, making music that everyone can relate to, that has the ability to bring people together, and to change people's minds.

**WCT: How did your Broadway debut as Charlie Price in *Kinky Boots* come about?**

JS: Just with a phone call! That one moment definitely changed the course of my year. Doing this has been one of the great joys of my life. I've learned so much, and I know I'm going to miss it so much when it is over.

**WCT: Often, writing a memoir is a way of purging something and learning from the past. What was the biggest thing you realized about your life with writing this installment of your life story?**

JS: I realized how much of an era that that time was. It was a completely different time, and though it doesn't feel like that long ago, it actually was. It gave me a lot of confidence, in a way, and made me realize as well, that my story is far from over. There's a hell of a lot more for me to do in this world. It now feels like an entirely new chapter, and that's exciting to me.





## BILLY Masters

"There is no hell. There is the disappearance of sinful souls. They are not punished. Those who repent obtain the forgiveness of God and enter the rank of souls who contemplate Him. But those who do not repent and cannot therefore be forgiven disappear."—Pope Francis makes heaven sound like a hot club. If you don't get past the velvet rope, you just wander around outside with the others. Been there, done that, met some great people. I'll take my chances.

I have about a month before I have to unexpectedly head overseas. But, don't ask me for details. All I can say is that my first stop will be London. But, that's it. I can disclose no more. Like **Stormy Daniels** and that bitch who bit Beyonce, I had to sign an NDA. Now, all I have to figure out is what to bring as a wedding gift. (That was a hint.) Here's what I'm thinking—what about offering the happy couple the chance to sleep in **Nick Jonas'** bed? Yes, you too can rent out Nick's tour bus for a mere \$1,500—presumably that is the price sans Nick. But at least you'll be close enough to leave behind a note or a scent on some bedding.

You may have seen headlines that an ABC on-air reporter came out as HIV-positive. Certainly, the dashing **Karl Schmid** looks familiar in that way I can't quite place. I knew he was either a Facebook friend, someone I saw on TV or someone I had sex with. Then I went through the archives on BillyMasters.com and saw that two years ago, the irrepressible **Carson Kressley** was openly flirting with Karl post-Oscars and then tweeted him an invitation to go out. Schmid is a 37-year-old Aussie who is on Los Angeles' local ABC affiliate. He said he's wanted to come out earlier, but "industry professionals said, 'Don't! It'll ruin you.'"

So why now? He posted, "I'm me. I'm just like you. I have a big heart and I want to be loved and accepted. I may be on TV from time to time, but at the end of the day I'm just an average guy who wants what we all want. To be accepted and loved by our friends and family and to be encouraged by our peers. Labels are things that come and go but your dignity and who you are is what defines you. I know who I am. I know what I stand for and while in the past I may not have always had clarity, I do now. Love me or hate me, that's up to you. But, for anyone who has ever doubted themselves because of those scary three letters and one symbol, let me tell you this, you are somebody who matters." Bravo!

While one person came out, another kinda went back in. Remember **Aaron Carter** telling us that he's bisexual? Well ... maybe not so much. He said, "It was more so just a story that happened when I was like 17 with somebody. I can find men and women attractive, but when it comes down to it, I think it was a little misconstrued. I see myself being with a woman and having kids. I want to have a family. I keep telling people that. I don't want it to be misconstrued too much, just because I was open about a story." You know



**Yes, you can sleep in Nick Jonas' bed—but there's a catch, Billy says.**

Photo by Michael Loccisano

the only thing I got out of that statement? That "misconstrued" was the word of the day on his calendar!

Remember a few weeks ago when I told you that **Armie Hammer** and **Timothée Chalamet** had a "no-frontal nudity" clause in their contracts for *Call Me By Your Name*? Many of you said this was news to you. You know who else it was news to? Writer **James Ivory**! The Oscar winner was none too happy when he found out about this clause, saying, "Certainly in my screenplay there was all sorts of nudity. But according to Luca, both actors had it in their contract that there would be no frontal nudity, and there isn't, which I think is kind of a pity. Again, it's just this American attitude. Nobody seems to care that much, or be shocked, about a totally naked woman. It's the men." Originally, Ivory was supposed to write AND direct the flick. Wonder what his version would have been like!

I always enjoy talking about **Pietro Boselli**, the Italian model whose career got a jump start while he was teaching math at University College London. With each photo shoot, Pietro has been inching his way closer to posing completely nude. How far has he gotten? See the latest pics on BillyMasters.com.

Our "Ask Billy" question comes from Jason in San Francisco: "I just saw *Game Over, Man!* and couldn't believe **Adam DeVine** was totally naked. Do you have pics? Was that all him? And what about that gay sex scene?"

For the benefit of my readers who have no idea what Jason is talking about, *Game Over, Man!* is a movie Netflix released last week. It's sorta like a cross between *The Hangover*, *Die Hard* and one of the later Cheech and Chong efforts. It is true—Adam DeVine goes full-frontal. He also goes full backal. That leads to more conversation about buttocks than I thought straight men had—but what do I know? Anyway, he is hiding in a closet, not wearing any pants and faking death by auto-



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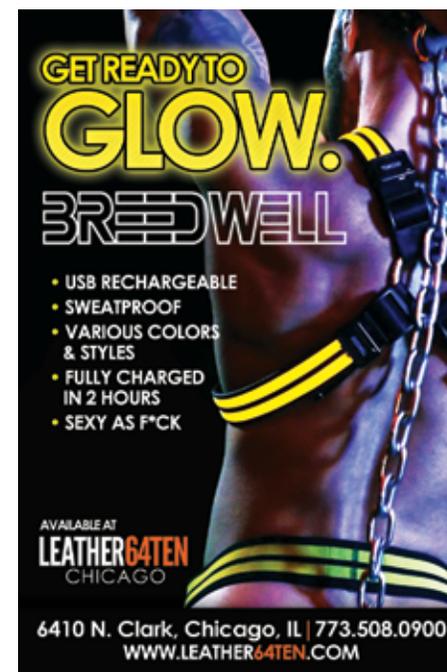


erotic asphyxiation when two hit men come into the hotel room and decide to have sex! It'll all make sense if you ever watch the film! Aside from DeVine, my attention was captured by the sight of the sizzling **Steve Howey**, who is playing one of the two hit men. Of course, we've seen him nude before in *Shameless*, but it bears repeating. You can see the full scene on BillyMasters.com.

When DeVine is going where Hammer and Chalamet didn't, it's definitely time to end yet another column. Maybe that *Call Me By Your Name* sequel should just go to Netflix—it doesn't seem to back away from a little dick. The same could be said of BillyMasters.com. If you have a question, send it along to [Billy@BillyMasters.com](mailto:Billy@BillyMasters.com), and I promise to get back to you before I tell my British host I'm allergic to corgis! Until next time, remember: One man's filth is another man's bible.

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