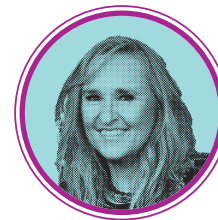




## D I V E R S I O N S

This month, New York City celebrates the 50th anniversary of the Stonewall riots—which sparked the modern LGBTQ rights movement—and hosts the first WorldPride event to be held in the U.S. Here, five artists and activists who are participating in the festivities share what Pride means to them.

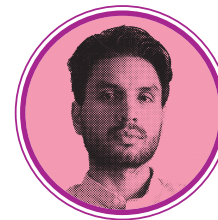
By Matthew Wexler • Illustration by Made Up



**Melissa Etheridge**  
*Singer-songwriter*

"I grew up in Kansas, and it was the late '70s when I started hearing rumblings of the gay liberation movement. I remember looking at my mom's copy of *Life* magazine and seeing a photo of women sitting next to each other in a bar. I exploded inside. The LGBTQ community reaches across every ethnicity and every country on earth. WorldPride is a celebration of love and something we still have to fight for. It reminds me of where we were 50 years ago, when we said, 'We're not going to hate ourselves anymore.' It's my honor to create art that reflects what we're going through—the worries, hopes, and dreams of our times."

*The Grammy- and Oscar-winning singer-songwriter will headline the WorldPride Closing Ceremony in Times Square (June 30)*



**Camilo Godoy**  
*Artist*

"There's a long history of presenting queerness and eroticism through photography, showing bodies in ways that are beautiful, poetic, and disruptive. Part of my recent project *Amigxs* appears in the [current] Brooklyn Museum exhibit and explores the intersection of desire and activism in public space. I think of mentors—artists like Félix González-Torres and David Wojnarowicz—who died because of political inaction during the AIDS crisis. I'm thrilled this exhibit can be a place for people to learn about communities not at the center of our collective narrative."

*The Colombian-born artist's work appears in the Brooklyn Museum's Nobody Promised You Tomorrow: Art 50 Years After Stonewall (through December 8)*



**Liz Bouk**  
*Opera singer*

"A lot led up to the moment in 2017 when I looked in the mirror and said, 'Oh my gosh, I'm a man.' After walking in my first Pride March last year with my family, I grabbed a bunch of books about Stonewall to understand how the current transgender movement fits into history. People like Sylvia Rivera, Lou Sullivan, and Marsha P. Johnson were fearless and gave themselves permission to live their truths. In New York City Opera's *Stonewall*, I'll be portraying a transgender character created specifically for a transgender singer. I hope people leave celebrating the progress we've made and also feel moved to advocate for change and acceptance of all LGBTQ people."

*The mezzo-soprano appears in Stonewall at New York City Opera (June 21–28)*



**Tommy Hom**  
*Stonewall 50 Director*

"I was born and raised in New York City and attended my first Pride event in 1985. My friends brought me to the Village, and I wound up in the middle of the crowd among so many diverse people, thinking, 'I'm not the only one.' I've discovered through my lifetime that we're constantly coming out as we evolve as individuals and as a community. Stonewall is a pivotal point in our history, and this commemoration takes it back to the streets. We should never forget that dancing under starlight or holding hands in public was once an act of rebellion. It's a rallying call, because we're not finished with the fight for equality."

*The Stonewall 50 director spearheads a rally at the site of the original uprising, Christopher Street and Waverly Place (June 28)*



**Gina Yashere**  
*Comedian*

"I've never seen myself as an activist—I'm a straight-up entertainer. I fell into comedy by accident when I wrote a skit for a charity talent show, and people were pissing themselves laughing. I thought, 'Oh, this is comedy!' I talk about myself and my life experiences, and so I'm political just by virtue of who I am: a black, female, gay immigrant. I discovered and came to admire people like Wanda Sykes and Whoopi Goldberg, black women making it in the industry against the odds. Let's suspend the doctrine of what we've been fed. See people as people. At the end of the day, we're all just walking hunks of meat."

*The British comedian will appear at Levity & Justice for All, a comedy benefit for Project LPAC, at PlayStation Theater (June 25)*