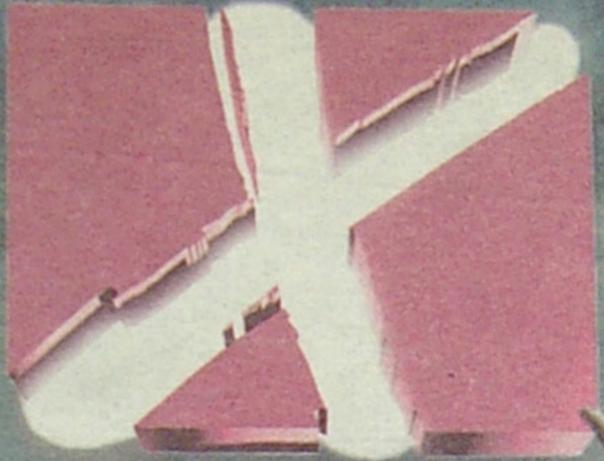


TORONTO'S GAY & LESBIAN BIWEEKLY

FREE • JUL 16, 1998 • 41,000 AUDITED CIRCULATION N° 358



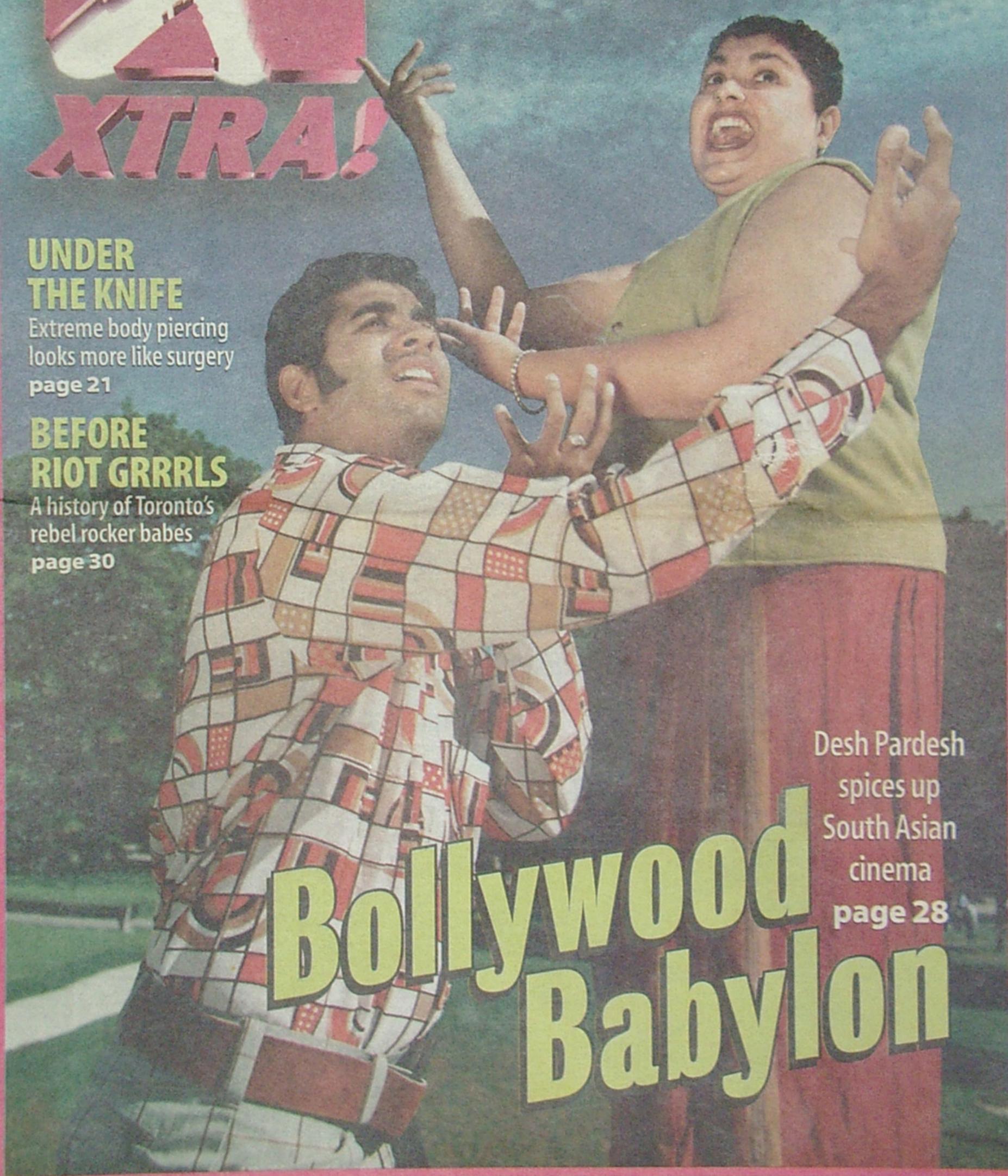
XTRA!

**UNDER
THE KNIFE**

Extreme body piercing
looks more like surgery
page 21

**BEFORE
RIOT GRRRLS**

A history of Toronto's
rebel rocker babes
page 30



**Bollywood
Babylon**

Desh Pardesh
spices up
South Asian
cinema
page 28

HOW TO SURVIVE A SEX PANIC! 19 GAY PROM! 23 SANDRA BERNHARD! 33 SAINT LARRY KRAMER? 33

mixed medium

"I'm sitting here, trembling and covered in blood, sweating heavily, and wondering to myself if this time I've crossed the line and gone too far... So now I can fold my glans entirely open."

— An excerpt from on-line journal BME's extreme surgical modification section (located at <http://www.bme.freeq.com/extreme/free/surgical/index.html>)

ON an Etobicoke highway, at the end of a strip mall between a dry cleaners and an Apache Burger, sits a tiny tattoo parlour: Tat-A-Rama is as shiny as an old time barber shop and as scrubbed as a surgical ward — which is what you'd hope for if you're going to get your penis split open.

Subincision — a permanent procedure where the penis is cut open lengthwise to expose the urethra — is touted as an "enhancement procedure," offering greater sexual pleasure.

"You cut a little at a time [over a month or two]. You stitch the urethra lining to the outer skin. If you do it too quickly it creates too much scar tissue," says body artist Tom Brazda, adding that subincision is becoming popular because of information about it on the Internet.

Shannon Larratt, publisher and editor of the Internet zine BME (Body Modification Extreme), subincised himself using the "clamp and cut" method Brazda describes. He says the operation enhanced his sexual pleasure to the extent he expected. But he can't describe the difference.

"Males into sounding and urethral play will understand," he says. (Sounding is inserting rods and other utensils into the urethra to stimulate the sensitive nerves there.) The increased sensitivity decreases somewhat over time as the tissue thickens, just like the skin thickens after circumcision, Larratt points out. But he says subincision is still an improvement.

Larratt's BME, published out of Toronto, features tales of circumcision, subdermal implants, urethral relocation ("so that it opens behind the scrotum"), "unusual plastic surgeries" and clitoral hood splitting and removal, and shows hundreds of pictures of subincised or bisected penises.

Bisection, or genital splitting, splits the length of the penis instead of just the underside below the head. "It takes longer, is more painful, and significantly more bloody... Typical side-effects include some shortening and reduction in erectile stiffness," reads one BME story.

"The benefits of two fully functional penises are obvious," Larratt says. A bisected penis has more exposed nerves and there are more possible configurations, but he adds that bisection is still very rare in body modification circles.

But there are doubters. Joann Braithwaite, a nurse and certified

WITH PROCEDURES LIKE PENIS-SPLITTING, PRACTITIONERS OF PIERCING & TATTOOING WALK A FINE LINE BETWEEN BODY ART & SURGERY

ARE TWO HEADS BETTER THAN ONE?

STORY BY CELENE ADAMS

infection control liaison with the Toronto City Public Health Department, can't see bisection leaving a functional penis. "How would it work? You'd have to carefully cut the urethra perfectly in half. They'd spray all over like a garden hose. One of the things that protects males from urinary tract infection is the urethra," she says.

With procedures like subincision, piercing and tattooing practitioners are walking a fine line between body art and surgery. And as they develop more sophisticated skills and knowledge, they're pushing for more education and information about these practices and for government regulation.

In September, an Ontario Ministry Of Health committee will release new guidelines to regulate infection control for personal services premises, like tattooing and piercing parlours.

Initiated because some 30 patients



became infected with hepatitis B last year through EEG needles (used to probe the scalp to measure brain activity via an electrical print), the guidelines also deal with sterilizing equipment and correct tattooing and piercing procedures.

"The thinking was that if it could happen in a clinical environment, it could happen elsewhere, too. And there's also been a couple of cases of hepatitis B that originated in tattoo parlours," says Pat Cloutier, a media relations officer with the ministry.

But some body artists say that

infection isn't the real issue and that these new regulations haven't caught up with the procedures currently being performed. "They need to ask us what they should be doing," says Blair (who doesn't use a last name), a body artist at Passage (on Church St) and Tat-A-Rama. Blair wants more industry guidelines, but he's skeptical about how useful the ministry rules will be.

"The really scary thing about subincision is that most people... do them at home, without gloves or disinfectant... [But] I learned a procedure that's safe," he says. A copy of Minor Surgery In Practice sits on Blair's bookshelf, along with Textbook Of Surgery.

"We are collaborating with piercers," says City Of Toronto nurse Joann Braithwaite, who adds that she ran the imminent guidelines by one studio. Staff at Urban Primitive, in the Church and Wellesley neighbourhood, say they saw a draft of the guidelines, but haven't heard anything since.

The Regulated Health Professions Act prohibits unlicensed practitioners from making incisions below the skin. But Jill Hefley, manager of public affairs and communications at the College Of Physicians And Surgeons Of Ontario, won't say whether practices like subincision are illegal. "It's buyer beware. You'd probably have to go the civil route if you wanted compensation for a procedure that went wrong, because practitioners aren't doctors and the college only regulates medical professionals," she says.

"It's a gray area. You're not going to advertise it," adds Tom Brazda, who owns Stainless Studios on Queen St W.

While its safety and legality are questionable, subincision is a traditional procedure. Like pearling (inserting balls beneath the skin on the penis shaft), subincision's been performed by laymen for centuries.

"The mutilation of the penis among Australian aboriginals, who thereby simulate a vagina, is a well known illustration of the designation of male identity when boys cross over a social divi-

sion into adulthood," reads a paper delivered at a 1997 body modification conference. The paper, "Body Marks: Neo-tribalism In Cool Societies," discusses the elaborate body rituals associated with spiritual cleansing and powers in many societies.

Other types of extreme body modification don't have such historical precedent. In another BME interview, Arizona's Steve Hayworth, a self-described 3-D artist who calls flesh his "medium," details how he inserted surgical steel "horns" in two men's foreheads.

With Brazda's assistance, Hayworth also inserted a fist-sized, flat, teflon map of Texas in a man's chest. The twentysomething man wanted to hold Texas "close to his heart." Hayworth separated tissue between the fascia (fibrous tissue on top of the muscle) and dermis, inserting the map into the subcutaneous (fatty layer beneath the skin). Hayworth also inserts jewellery beneath skin on the back of the hand, on the forehead and in the forearm.

In Toronto, Brazda says, "a lot more people are asking for what Steve's doing. They go elsewhere to get it done; they're probably doing it without tools or knowledge... It's a backlash against homogenization. If you want to look more 'normal' that's okay, but not abnormal... The demand's there, but who're you gonna practise on?"

Blair says he practises on his friends — mostly other gay body artists. He agrees that "to be a tattoo artist takes years of practice. Even if there were a course that makes you a certified piercer, that still doesn't make you capable," he says.

Joann Braithwaite agrees. "Whether or not I think there should be a course is immaterial because there never will be. The way that people become piercers and tattoo artists is through apprenticeship," she says, adding that artistic talent and knowledge of physiology are more important than the new guidelines.

Body artists say that's because the ministry guidelines won't go far enough. Tom Brazda, along with others, is looking to put together a public information forum on the issue. "If the government guidelines aren't up to my standards, I'll set mine higher," Brazda says.

Which is what you'd hope for if you're going to get your penis split open.

cheap love

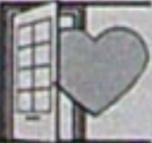
Place your Friends Male Classified in the next issue of Xtra for only \$10!

Plus get a FREE 30 minute membership to Cruiseline!

Phone: 416.925.6665
Fax: 416.925.6674
Or come see us at
491 Church St, 2nd Floor

Next Booking Deadline:
Monday, July 27 @ 5pm

CASEY HOUSE



10 YEARS
1988 - 1998
HOSPICE

.....

CASEY HOUSE



FOUNDATION

Casey House Hospice provides palliative and supportive care for people living with HIV/AIDS. Casey House Foundation raises funds to support Hospice programs and initiatives.

Events Coordinator

A highly-motivated, positive professional, you will lead our event planning process. Responsible for goal setting, budgeting, marketing, event production and public relations, you will also ensure appropriate and timely donor recognition and stewardship. On signature or community events, you will represent Casey House on event specific committees, supervise volunteer activities, develop corporate sponsorship packages and proposals, assess and approve proposals, and foster on-going relationships with community event organizers. Your university degree or college diploma in fundraising, or public or media relations is complemented by 3 years' experience in special events, fundraising or public relations for a nonprofit organization. Successful partnerships with volunteers, computer skills including WP6.1, the ability to work flexible hours, and previous experience with HIV/AIDS-related issues makes you our ideal candidate.

Qualified applicants with exemplary interpersonal and organizational skills are invited to forward their résumés, by Friday, July 31, 1998, to:

Director, Human Resources & Operations, Casey House Hospice, 9 Huntley Street, Toronto, Ontario M4Y 2K8.

Casey House is committed to diversity in the workplace and welcomes applications from the communities we serve.