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## Chicago Women Celebrate Pride at The Back Lot Bash

by Winnie McCroy  
EDGE Editor  
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Things are swinging for Pride in Chicago, and the Back Lot Bash is there to make sure it's not just a Boys Town! This Friday and Saturday, June 23-24 in the Andersonville neighborhood of Chicago. Organizers strive to bring the community together, to showcase emerging and established talent, and to be active citizens by helping to raise money for community organizations.

Founded in 2004 by powerhouse duo Amie Klujian and Christina Wiesmore, the hottest, most rockin' festival for queer women caps a month of events for LGBTs and the women's community. It has grown from a single-day event to a four-day weekend party drawing thousands of people from all over the mid-west and across the U.S.

"We founded the festival because we wanted to provide a platform for women musicians and performers to share talents with the LGBT community; and for women in the community to have a meaningful, validating, entertaining space so they can feel inspired, engaged and 100 percent themselves. Our goal was to simply to reinforce and provide voice for our community -- in every respect," said Klujian.



Organizer Amie Klujian

Early issues were centered around how to best nurture and grow the event from a predominantly local one to one that has more national pull and exposure, all without losing their local identity and authenticity.

Soon after launching in 2004, Back Lot Bash's popularity organically grew, and organizers focused on staying true to their mission of creating a real "Chicago-style" event.

"We now always focus on fostering and creating an atmosphere and environment that makes it easy for people to connect with each other. One that is accessible, comfortable and welcoming in nature. Everything we do keeps this in mind," said Klujian. "As a result we feel our event mimics the heart of the amazing Chicago LGBT community we live in and that's gratifying for us."



Now in its 14th year, the event spans two weekends and attracts more than 5,000 attendees. Organizers have learned to 'expect the unexpected' when it comes to problems, as well as keeping the event as personal as possible by never losing site of the guests' needs.

They also champion local and emerging talents from different genres with the same enthusiasm and on the same shared stage and platform as 'established' performers.

The entertainment line for 2017 includes Whitney Mixer, Madison Paige, Sea and Gunn (Daniela Sea & Gunn Lundemo), Rebel & Basketcase (music from Evan Rachel Wood and Zach Villa), Bria and Chrissy, Catfight, JD Samson, Kiyomi Valentine, DJ Goodboy ad Tory Whodat, among others.

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## SCHEDULE:

FRI JUNE 23 - 'WHISKEY, WINE & WOMEN' TASTING EVENT: This newly created event is a social mixer that allows women to mingle and enjoy each other's company all in the context of sampling some great whiskey, wine and local craft beer products. The event has wonderful live music by Jess Godwin and caps off with vibes by DJ All The Way Kay. It's a bit relaxed in tone and will warm people up to what lies ahead. 5255 N. Clark, Chicago

SAT JUNE 24 - 'PRIDE FAMILY FEST': (11 a.m.-2 p.m.) Our 4th Annual Family Fest provides LGBT families space to meet each other and enjoy live kids music, entertainment, puppet shows, family picture booths, facepainting, crafts and balloon twisting all for the children. There are very few events geared towards LGBT families and it's been really fun to use our space to create kid-focused entertainment and to provide a welcoming and fun space for families. Entertainment by Laura Doherty & The Heartbeats, Jaclyn Rada & Girlband, and Mr. Scott's Amazing Giant Bubble Show. 5238 N. Clark, Chicago

SAT JUNE 24 - 'ALL DAY BASH': (4-11 p.m.) This is our flagship outdoor party that's been going strong since Back Lot Bash's inception. Amazing hosts, performers, DJ's including Kiyomi Valentine, JD Samson, DJ Goodboy, Tori WhoDat and all female bands Fembot and Catfight. This is an overall, high-energy festive environment. 5238 N. Clark, Chicago

SUN JUNE 25 - 'PRIDE DAY BASH': (4-11 p.m.). This outdoor event picks up where the Chicago pride parade leaves off and caps off our festival. It's a day of celebration and solidarity and will leave people inspired and proud with a confidence in themselves and the community that motivates them to stay engaged and involved throughout the year. Lineup includes DJ Duo Sea & Gunn (Daniela Sea from the L Word), DJ Goodboy and You Tube sensations Bria and Chrissy. Superstar American singer, songwriter, rapper, model and radio host DEV will be headlining. 5238 N. Clark, Chicago



The event is female-centered, although men sometimes perform (often with women-led groups) and are welcome. It's a 21+ event (except for Pride Family Fest), and all participants are urged to "grant equal respect to one another."

This event is possible because of the generous support received from long-term sponsors such as BMO Harris Bank, MillerCoors, Revolution Brewery, Fetzer Vineyards, A&N Mortgage company, Human Rights Campaign, Bai Brands, Evanston Subaru and CMSA, among others. Back Lot Bash organizers hope to grow these relationships beyond Pride month, and will continue to host the Girls Night Out events on the third Saturday of each month.

The event also has a charitable aspect, as they raise funds for local organizations whose mission is centered around girl and women-focused empowerment. Over the years, they've supported a variety of local and national charities including AIDS charities, breast cancer research non-profits, LGBT homeless youth assistance programs, and other causes meaningful to the LGBT community.

This year the Bash will be raising funds for Organized Chaos, an organization with a mission to support philanthropic endeavors in all communities (while reaching out to empower a community of diverse women through rides, charity events, Pride events and education).

Organizers hope that Chicago women "feel our event is an important part of their Pride weekend experience. We also recognize there's so much happening in Chicago over pride month and we encourage everyone to get out and experience all that's available to them."

"Back Lot Bash offers a wide array of activities that reaches across a broad spectrum of our community, so we're honored if Chicagoans feel proud of the event and feel comfortable calling it their own, no matter how they identify," said Klugian.

Come on out and get your Pride on at Back Lot Bash!

For more information, visit [backlotbashchicago.com](http://backlotbashchicago.com) or <https://www.facebook.com/BackLotBash/>



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The theme and title of "American Horror Story" Season 7 will be revealed next week, showrunner Ryan Murphy tweeted Monday night.

[More»](#)

## Back Lot Bash 2015 with Ruby Rose, Fortune Feimster, Brid...



Winnie McCroy is the Women on the EDGE Editor, HIV/Health Editor, and Assistant Entertainment Editor for EDGE Media Network, handling all women's news, HIV health stories and theater reviews throughout the U.S. She has contributed to other publications, including The Village Voice, Gay City News, Chelsea Now and The Advocate, and lives in Brooklyn, New York.

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