



Afterglow Festival features six nights of off-Broadway-style cabaret

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It may be the Afterglow Festival finale that has gotten the theater world's attention this year, but the second annual event offers more than a dozen performance artists in six nights of entertainment.

The festival, relocated to the Crown & Anchor downtown on Commercial Street, kicks off Tuesday night with an opening party and show, then has multiple acts nightly – five encores from last year and seven more – through Sept. 16. All were invited based on creator Quinn Cox's aim to bring the latest acts to Provincetown.

Cox, who also opens the event as half of the astrological entertainment team of Starsky + Cox, wants audiences to “see works that came and went through New York, were critically acclaimed and that we were able to snag. Or (see) things that are headed that way.”

And what about that finale? Co-founder of Afterglow is actor/director John Cameron Mitchell, best known as creator and star of cult favorite stage show/movie “Hedwig and the Angry Inch,” about an East German transgender singer who tours with a rock 'n' roll band. Mitchell, who also directed the 2010 film “Rabbit Hole,” and “Hedwig” composer/lyricist Stephen Trask, who also scored such films as “The Station Agent” and “Little Fockers,” are bringing a sneak preview of a “Hedwig” sequel Sept. 16 to Provincetown.

“The idea was to premiere a ‘Hedwig’ sequel and at first it was just a reading, but now (Trask) is coming and it's turning into a much more exciting deal,” Cox says. While details are scarce, he says, “I do know (the sequel) is in the present day, that it's many years later and the journey has continued. A lot has happened in Hedwig's world.”

For Cox, that kind of premiere is what the festival, named for the time after the summer crowds leave, has always been about. One goal is “to premiere things, even works in progress. It signals to me that we can develop shows in the off-season. That's what I want to do, and also create a commercial source for entertainment in Provincetown.”

Cox hopes to rekindle the energy of groundbreaking work like the plays that made Provincetown the birthplace of American theater a century ago and launched then-avante-garde Eugene O'Neill work. He wants people to understand that “Provincetown is a place you can see things from off-Broadway or before off-Broadway.”

Toward that end, the Afterglow Festival is partnering with Joe's Pub, a live-performance showcase in New York City. That venue is promoting the festival while Provincetown shows will tout what's coming up at Joe's Pub.

“The whole genre of cabaret stars is becoming bigger than it's been, probably, since the '50s or '60s, and celebrities are flocking to see them,” Cox says. He notes that Lady Rizo is coming to Provincetown straight from the Edinburgh Festival Fringe in Scotland “and that's what we want – to be on the festival circuit.”

The various Afterglow cabaret acts (with all evenings starting at 7 p.m.) include music, comedy, dancing, storytelling and drag performances.

“The spirit here is one of being progressive,” he says. “We have to keep the progressive spirit (in Provincetown) alive.”

STAGE SCHEDULE

After the opening, each night of the Afterglow Festival has two or three separate shows. Featured acts will be:

- Tuesday: Astrologers/entertainers Stella Starsky and Quinn Cox do their act in "Steer the Stars" and host performances by various festival artists for a party and townie night performance.
- Wednesday: musical vignettes by comic monologist Amber Martin; Justin Vivian Bond's evening of songs and short stories; Joseph Keckler's "I Am an Opera," about life and art.
- Thursday: Tina Alexis Allen's one-person play in which she plays her father, who had a secret gay life while working for the Vatican and raising 13 children; Grammy-winning singer and comedian Lady Rizo; Heloise & The Savoir Faire, described as an "international glam party-punk sensation" with Heloise Williams and her band presenting new mythology-based work.
- Sept. 14: singer Bridget Everett, promising "a night of chaos, sex and tender moments"; Cole Escola + Erin Markey, a comedic cabaret act about growing up.
- Sept. 15: Dan Fishback in "thirtynothing," about his life and gay artists who died in the '80s and '90s; John Cantwell in "Love, Connie," about a dancer whose cat is threatened.
- Sept. 16: Jay Brannan in "Rob Me Blind"; John Cameron Mitchell and Stephen Trask in a work-in-progress of a sequel to "Hedwig and the Angry Inch."

If you go:

What: Afterglow Festival

When: Tuesday through Sunday

Where: Crown & Anchor, 247 Commercial St.

Tickets: \$30 for single shows, evenings for \$51 or \$78, packages available

Reservations and information: www.afterglowfestival.org

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