

ARTS »

# Kat Single-Dain consistently demolishes the fourth wall

by Chandler Walter on May 7th, 2023 at 12:04 PM



Kat Single-Dain on the stage of the Dusty Flowerpot Cabaret  
MICHAEL IANNI

The line between audience and stage has never been so malleable.

That was my thinking when I was sitting—and dancing, and drinking, and Hustle-ing—at the Russian Hall this past April while experiencing (because merely “watching” is definitely not the right word) Kat Single-Dain’s *Disco Inferno*.

For those who didn’t happen to catch one of the performances last month, *Disco Inferno* is a musical production depicting the rivalry between a groovy discotheque and its neighbouring sports bar, with a property line dispute setting the scene for a dance-off/sports-off to decide the rightful owner of... four inches of property.

But what’s most special about the show—and for a show with a sentient robot, a light-up dance floor, and some seriously catchy tunes courtesy of Shirley Gnome, that’s saying something—is how it incorporates the audience into the disco-infused world of the 1970s.

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“In a selfish way, I just want to produce stuff so that I can have a really good, weird time,” Single-Dain says. We’re chatting on the stage of the Dusty Flowerpot Cabaret, the non-profit society that Single-Dain is the artistic executive director of. *Disco Inferno*’s extended series of shows has just wrapped.

“I like weird, really expressive dancing. And I find it’s hard to do that in the typical clubs. You know, it’s more of just average, normal dancing. So you have to kind of create a theatrical vibe for people to feel welcome.”

*Disco Inferno*’s audience was not only encouraged to learn the Hustle in the lead up to the show’s opening number, but VIP seats were dance-floor-side two-tops, the disco’s bar was serving to audience and cast members alike, and the entire play culminated in a dodgeball game that saw some serious audience participation.

But the immersive experience wasn’t a one-off in Single-Dain’s book. It all started back when she decided to turn a feature film she’d written, *Hard Times Hit Parade*, into a theatrical production.

“I thought to myself, ‘What makes it different when it’s theatre?’” she says. “And what makes it different is immersion—that the people who are coming are not watching a screen, they’re entering into a room, they’re smelling smells, they’re interacting with other people, they’re wearing different clothes.”

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As the artistic executive director of the Dusty Flowerpot Cabaret Society, Single-Dain seemingly has no limit when it comes to creating fun experiences, and she's got the perfect setting for it.



Kat Single-Dain on the stage of the Dusty Flowerpot Cabaret

MICHAEL IANNI

Located in the studio space of a Mount Pleasant apartment building called The Artiste, the Dusty Flowerpot Cabaret is tricky to locate at first. You need to navigate around to the building's back alley, and then it's just a single sandwich board that heralds your arrival at something other than an apartment's backdoor.

But walking into the space is anything but ordinary.

The Dusty Flowerpot Cabaret features a stage with an assortment of instruments, a tiered dance floor, a bar, and a seating area. Various doodads and knick-knacks occupy the walls and shadowed corners, from giant paper mache heads to a speed dating spin wheel to the robot that was rolling around during *Disco Inferno*.

That spin dating wheel is part of a monthly event held at the Dusty Flowerpot Cabaret, Gloria's Happy Hour, in which Single-Dain takes on the persona of her long-time character Gloria to bring some much-needed comedic levity to the often anxiety-inducing art of speed dating.

'[Gloria's] basically an over-the-hill chorus girl, who now does stand-up comedy, but without calling it comedy, because it's just her,' describes Single-Dain.

"She's super into love, and hooking people up with each other. She's very promiscuous, and sex positive. And so the Gloria's speed dating event that I do has developed over the years just from people saying that I should host a real speed dating event, but as Gloria, so that's what I do. And it's basically immersive theater, but where you're really actually speaking with people."

The space also plays host to weekly swing dance nights (and a series of dance classes offered by none other than Single-Dain herself), clown workout classes, and the occasional private function.

And sometimes the experience is too big to be held within four walls—as is the case with the annual Parade of Lost Souls, another project from Single-Dain that has been bringing revelers out to Vancouver's streets on the Saturday closest to Halloween for a decade now.

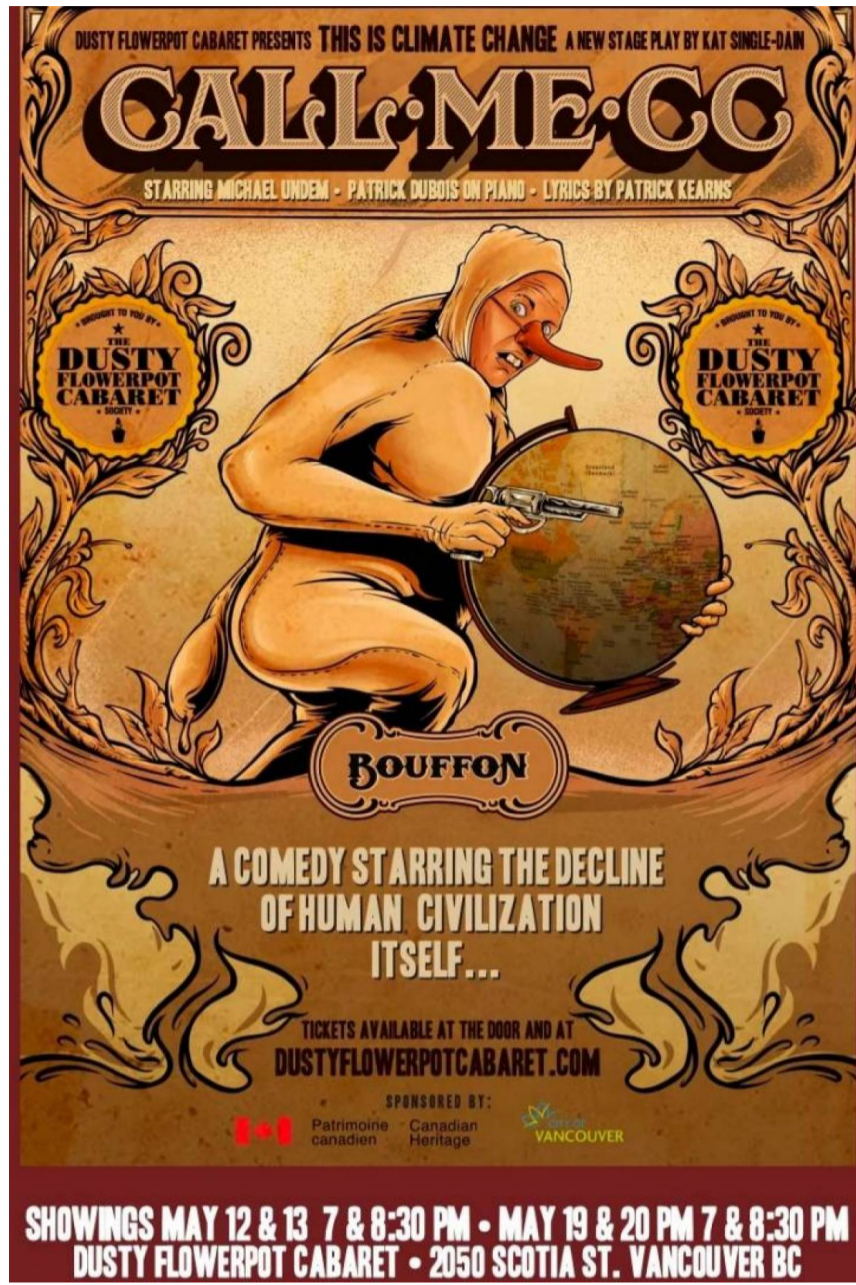
For a city that is infamous for its apparent lack of fun, Single-Dain is something of bastion against that long-held stereotype.

"I see that there's lots of people in Vancouver that are game for having fun, they want to have fun," she says. "And I also see the other side of it, which is that some of the bylaws of the city do make it hard for productions to happen. It's more challenging, I think, here than in Berlin, say, or Montreal, to just make something fun happen... The people in Vancouver also are varied. So you get people who don't want any noise in their neighborhood.

Single-Dain continues with, "I think that the more fun events that happen in Vancouver, the more will happen. It's a chain reaction. And the more people experience something

that they actually see the value of, the more they'll be willing to hear sounds and not complain about noise."

So what's upcoming for Single-Dain and the Dusty Flowerpot Cabaret? She isn't taking much time to bask in the afterglow of *Disco Inferno*'s success; the artist's next production, a comedy starring climate change titled *Call Me CC*, premieres on May 12.



Call Me CC Poster

[DUSTYFLOWERPOTCABARET.COM](http://DUSTYFLOWERPOTCABARET.COM)

"It's a musical comedy about climate change, where you get to meet climate change himself," Single-Dain says, noting that both *Call Me CC* and *Disco Inferno* were written as a result of her needing a creative outlet during the pandemic.

"I think that it being a comedy reminds us of why we would want to save ourselves, or save humanity. Right? Because you're enjoying yourself. You already have the reasons for why you might want to take action. But it's definitely a comedy."

Tickets to *Call Me CC*, *Gloria's Happy Hour*, and whatever else the *Dusty Flowerpot Cabaret* might dream up in the future, can be found at [dustyflowerpotcabaret.com](http://dustyflowerpotcabaret.com).

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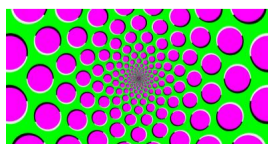
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