



Tina Haynes



# THE CALIFORNIA INN

## Cali Bar Re-launch

**Thought to be the UK's only trans-woman owner of a relaunched gay bar, brings the T back to the British LGBTI cabaret club scene**

Over the weekend of July 15<sup>th</sup> to 16<sup>th</sup> some 500 members of the Luton community and other areas flocked to the relaunch of the town's Cali Bar, with top LGBT acts performing, including Jordan Gray of The Voice, Muslim drag queen Asifa Lahore and drag king, Adam All.

The new owner, Tina Haynes, was also celebrating 25 years post-op and out. The emphasis was very much on inclusivity and the 'tectonic' change in attitudes since she went through transition, which for her at the time was very much a misunderstood and traumatic experience.

She said: "This is going to be a place where trans people can come and enjoy themselves alongside other members of the LGBTI community.

"When I took over the Cali it was very much a typical 1980s gay bar with dark walls, black ceilings and loud music. My aim was to turn it much more into a contemporary experience, so I replaced the black and purples with pinks and greys, adding sofas where people can chill out, as well as space for dancing."

And she is very upbeat about the future of the gay club and bar scene.

"Due to the recession, the conventional straight-scene was hit for six, whereas the pink pound is still strong.

"This is, and will be, a celebration of diversity and acceptance, as well as a happy ending to the many years of unhappiness I experienced when these things were taboo."

Touching on another 'taboo' area for some, prolific and outspoken Muslim drag Queen Asifa Lahore, who performed on the Saturday night to much applause, and with a razor sharp wit, singing 'I'm a Punjabi Girl' and Conchita Wurst's Eurovision winner, 'Rise Like a Phoenix' added:

"I get a very much mixed reaction from within my community. It's divided; but the more progressive Muslims get what I'm about. I'm certainly not out to offend people or cause damage.

"To be honest I was honoured and humbled to be asked to perform at The Cali and felt it was important to me to do it, as Luton is a massive melting pot of cultures, just like London. Also I am one of the few who are out, and I want people to see you can be gay as well as a Muslim."

Also appearing on the Friday night was transgender The Voice UK semi-finalist and up-and-coming-star, Jordan Gray.

"I love seeing the positivity of new projects being pioneered by trans-proprietors and always want to be part of new things, so doubly happy to be a part of this."

Also, rising drag king performer, Adam All, appeared on the Saturday night, along with his partner, Apple Derrieres who played the leading lady to his suave character.

Adam said: "This is absolutely thrilling for me because the main thing I noticed when I walked through the door was that there was something about the Cali which made me feel being welcomed with open arms.

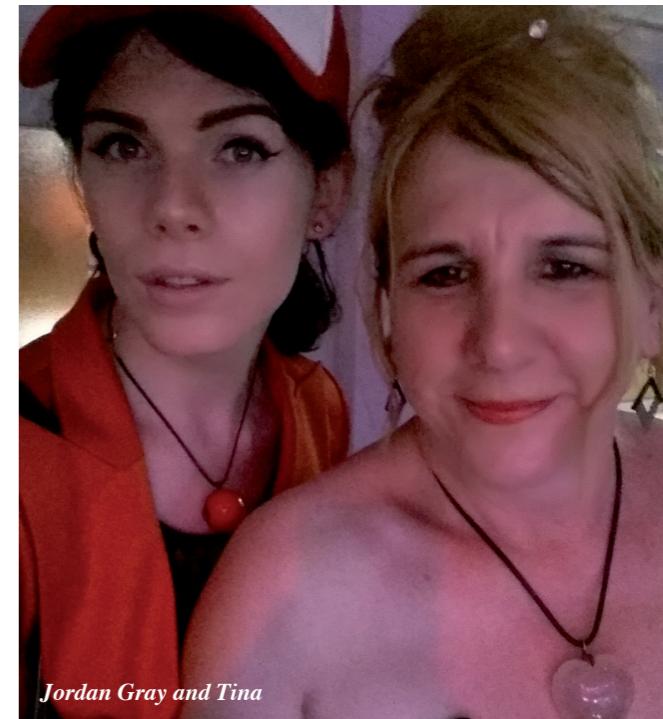
"I want my audience to laugh but I also want them to wonder why. I know if they say, 'I'm laughing because you're not very alpha and not very male' then they may think, 'Why am I laughing then?' You're clearly quite comfortable in your own skin, apart from the fact you're being boxed into these ridiculous and really quite tiny boxes we put men into."

His partner, Apple, added: "Too often you go into gay bars and you sort of feel intimidated, or there's an edge there, so it's really nice you can come somewhere where you instantly feel welcome. Particularly now, in the current climate, there's a need to feel safe."

The Cali Bar also supports Mermaids, a charity which works with and supports young people and families affected by gender identity issues.



Adam & Apple Derrieres partner



Jordan Gray and Tina

