

# THE CLUB



## q&a: justin bond

Justin Bond, cabaret performer, songwriter, and expert storyteller, is a downtown New York City treasure. This month Bond will release *Dendrophile*, the first full-length studio album of the artist's career. Mallory Rice talks to Bond about the occasion.

### DO YOU REMEMBER YOUR FIRST PERFORMANCE?

I don't actually, but it was reportedly when I was 18 months old in a church Christmas show, and I said "I wish you a merry Christmas one and all!" [Laughs]. But my first cabaret show was when I was in college; I did one at the [Adelphi] University Center.

### YOU SEEM VERY COMFORTABLE ON STAGE.

I think because I have always been kind of stared at in a way, or noticed...used to people paying attention to what I do. When I started to have the opportunity to be on stage, I felt more comfortable because I knew they were there because they either wanted to see me or already liked me [laughs]. I was able to control what people were thinking about me, as opposed to wondering.

### WHEN DID YOU START MAKING MATERIAL FOR THIS ALBUM?

A couple years ago I decided to stop performing as Kiki [in the drag cabaret duo Kiki & Herb]. I felt I needed to find a voice for myself. I have always wanted to write songs but I was so intimidated by the idea. I talked to some of my friends who are songwriters and they gave me pointers and encouragement. I was in Tennessee at this gathering in the mountains and I

decided I was going to write a song! I went off into the woods and sat on a log and wrote a song! I came back and sang it for everybody and they seemed to like it. Then I just started writing more songs.

### IN YOUR STAGE SHOW, YOU TELL GREAT STORIES BETWEEN NUMBERS. ARE THEY PLANNED?

The stories evolve. Like, something's happened, and then I tell the story, and it's kind of funny, and then I'll repeat the story for a while. The stories come and go, because things replace them. I try for them to at least have *something* to do with the songs. But I don't sit down and write a script—it's just improvising a story and it becomes part of the lore, as it were.

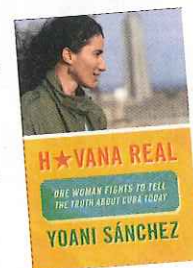
### WHAT DID YOU WANT TO CAPTURE ON YOUR STUDIO ALBUM?

I feel like the thing people like about my shows is that they feel very intimate. People can kind of get to know me. But the shows are performances, even though the music is something people can feel in the room. I felt like if I was going to record something, I wanted it to be an intimate thing, like I was singing into the listener's ear or in the room, as opposed to the theater or cabaret. I wanted to have songs that speak about my way of looking at the world.

## havana real

Yoani Sánchez didn't intend to spark a revolution when she first sat down with her old laptop back in 2007. Her motives for writing were simple and cathartic: frustrated with monotonous media coverage of the state of affairs in Cuba, the Havana-based blogger wanted to paint a realistic picture of daily life under the Castro regime. But after she christened her online forum the new "Generation Y"—a name inspired by people whose names contain the "Greek Y" like herself and were

born in the '70s and '80s—it became clear that Sánchez's blog was a different kind of diary: one with the potential to affect real change. Three years later, the conversation she started is still going, both on- and offline. Her new book



*Havana Real* (Melville House) is a companion to Sánchez's blog, including a selection of 500-plus posts collected in English for the first time. Filled with short, to-the-point narratives, she documents how activities like taking a walk or buying groceries, can be interrupted by intrusive measures such as being forced to show ID. Including entries made within the last six months, Sánchez's intimate book succeeds in breaking through a wall we'd otherwise be left behind. LIZA DARWIN

## independent lens

The Emmy Award-winning PBS program *Independent Lens* is celebrating its annual art month (April) by premiering a weekly documentary series, featuring a collection of art-world misfits. The marathon kicks off with *The Radiant Child*, an intimate profile of Jean-Michel Basquiat's rise to fame. Filled with rare footage collected by his close friend acclaimed filmmaker Tamra Davis, the young artist's story begins triumphantly and ends in tragedy. In *The Desert of Forbidden Art*, things wrap up differently when the oppressed artists of 20th century Russia get the last laugh thanks to Igor Savitsky and his gallery of banned works. In *Waste Land*, contemporary artist Vik Muniz attempts to execute an unlikely collaboration with the garbage diggers of Rio de Janeiro and thoroughly succeeds. And equally peculiar is the story of Mark Hogancamp: A victim of a brutal beating, Hogancamp finds solace in his fantastical staged scenes, which create a "world" he dubbed *Marwencol*, and is now gaining interest from curators the world over. Though it may seem counter intuitive to observe art month by sitting in front of your television, this stirring group of stories have all the impact of a gallery crawl. CS

