SECLUDED RAINBOWS: "GENDER QUEER"

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"My deepest emotional relationships have always been with women. Did that mean I was a lesbian? But my sexual fantasies involved two male partners. Was I a gay boy trapped in a girl's body?"

Of all quotes in "Gender Queer," this one strikes me the most. Despite being a cisgender woman, I'm aware that the quote relates to most transgender and non-binary individuals. When they begin questioning their gender identity, they ask similar questions. Some transgender and non-binary people rely on LGBTQIA+ literature like "Gender Queer" to answer them.

But now that these books are being banned, what are transgender and non-binary people going to turn to for support?

Hello and welcome to Secluded Rainbows! This is a biweekly column that publishes stories every other Tuesday. In each story, I will discuss an LGBTQIA+ book that's currently being banned or challenged. The topics will vary from same-sex relationships to gender identities.

The very first book I'm highlighting is "Gender Queer," a graphic memoir that I argue is one of the most representative stories about gender, sexuality and the LGBTQIA+ community. There are many artifacts that make it a gorgeous, yet controversial piece of literature.

"Gender Queer" follows the story of its author, Maia Kobabe, who is asexual, non-binary and uses e/em/eir pronouns. According to the prologue, Kobabe began writing the story in 2013. However, it wasn't published until May 28, 2019.

"Gender Queer" has multiple themes. A major one is coming out. For the longest time, Kobabe kept eir gender identity a secret. Towards the end of the memoir, Kobabe consistently hesitates to correct people when they misgender em. Furthermore, when e begins teaching comic workshops at a local library, e doesn't share eir pronouns with eir students, even though e feels ashamed by it.

"Every time I fail to give my pronouns, I feel like a coward," Kobabe says on page 238.

Kobabe's closet experience is a vivid representation of what people of diverse gender identities and sexual orientations endure in their lives. Some feel they should come out but are afraid to do so.

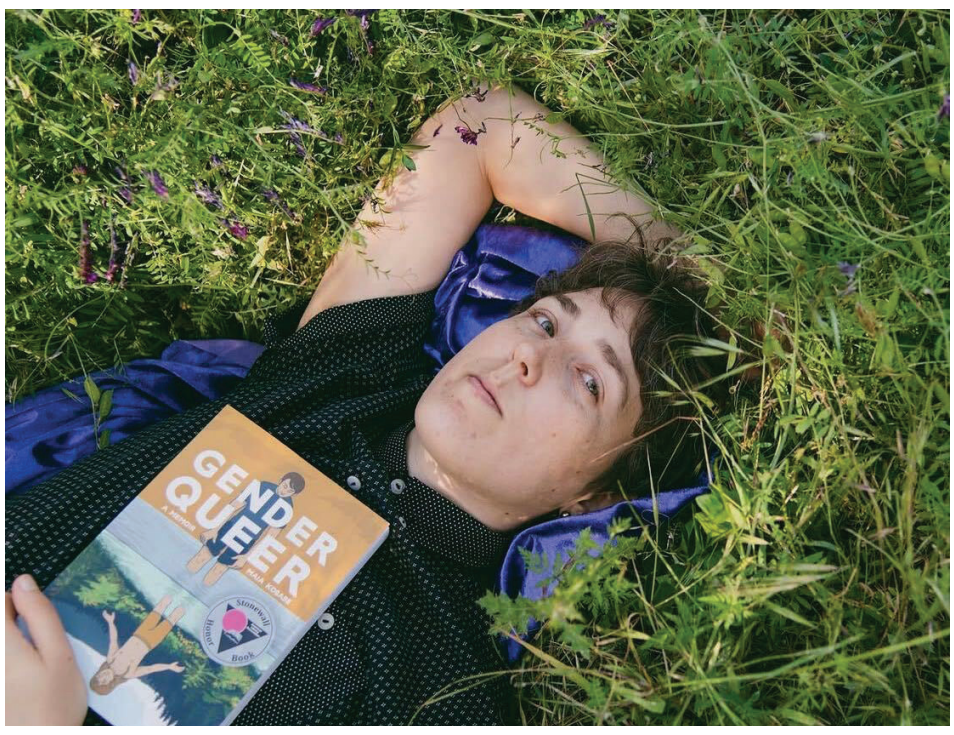
Another crucial element in "Gender Queer" is the concept of questioning one's own identity. In many scenes, Kobabe asks emselves if e is a lesbian, bisexual or asexual individual. Kobabe considers emselves bisexual in eir teenage years but asexual in adulthood. A similar process takes course with Kobabe's gender identity. At first, Kobabe identifies emselves as female, the sex e was assigned at birth. When Kobabe begins high school, e starts to believe that e is not a girl. Growing up in a time where labels like non-binary were nonexistent, Kobabe wouldn't identify as non-binary until the 2010s.

As of 2023, "Gender Queer" has been published in eight languages: Spanish, French, Italian, Polish, Dutch, Portuguese, Norwegian and Czech. It received the Alex Award and the Stonewall Award Nonfiction Honor Book in 2020. "Gender Queer" was also nominated for the Garden State Teen Book Award in 2021, and it was one of Denver Public School's top 100 high school books in 2020 and 2021.

"Gender Queer" received a lot of praise after it was published. The School Library Journal said it's "a great resource for those who identify as nonbinary or asexual as well as for those who know someone who identifies that way and wish to better understand." Meanwhile, Booklist said it "grapples with issues of identity and sexuality in ways that highlight how messy and painful but ultimately vindicating the process of understanding and valuing yourself can be."

Unfortunately, "Gender Queer" also faced backlash. According to Harper's Bazaar, it was banned in Colorado, Florida, Texas, Utah and many other states in 2023. "Gender Queer" was the most challenged book in 2021, 2022 and 2023. It was also the second most challenged book in 2024 and the third most challenged book in 2025. That year, "Gender Queer" received 25 challenges.

According to Kobabe's article, "I Made the Most Banned Book in America," "Gender Queer" was threatened to be removed from many libraries. One is the Patmos Library in Jamestown, Mich. A few years ago, staff refused to ban "Gender Queer" and other books from the library, and as a result, Jamestown's citizens defunded it in fall 2022.

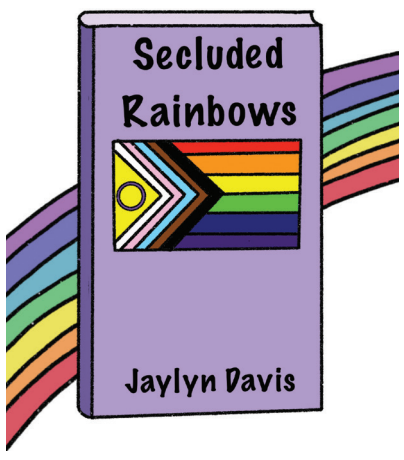


Author Maia Kobabe holding eir graphic memoir "Gender Queer." The book has received both high forms of praise and backlash due to its content relating to gender and sexuality.

PHOTO COURTESY OF @MARISSALESHNOVPHOTO ON INSTAGRAM

Banning "Gender Queer" is like smothering the LGBTQIA+ community. While there are many books that address gender and sexuality, "Gender Queer" is unique because it's a textual and visual representation of those things. Its images allow us to see what Kobabe went through and how e embraces who e is. Without graphic memoirs like "Gender Queer," LGBTQIA+ audiences will miss out on a remarkably distinct resource.

"Queer youth are often forced to look outside their own homes, and outside the education system, to find information on who they are," Kobabe said in eir author statement. "Removing or restricting queer books in libraries and schools is like cutting a lifeline for queer youth, who might not yet even know what terms to ask Google to find out more about their own identities, bodies and health."



LOGO BY LILLIAN LAFEMINA, ARTIST EDITOR/THE DAILY CAMPUS

Nate Amos streamlines This Is Lorelei's sound

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American singer-songwriter Nate Amos has been releasing music under various names for well over a decade, but has found his stride in the 2020s. With five releases since 2020 as part of the experimental duo Water From Your Eyes, and two under his solo project This Is Lorelei, it's clear that Amos is not short of ideas he's eager to share.

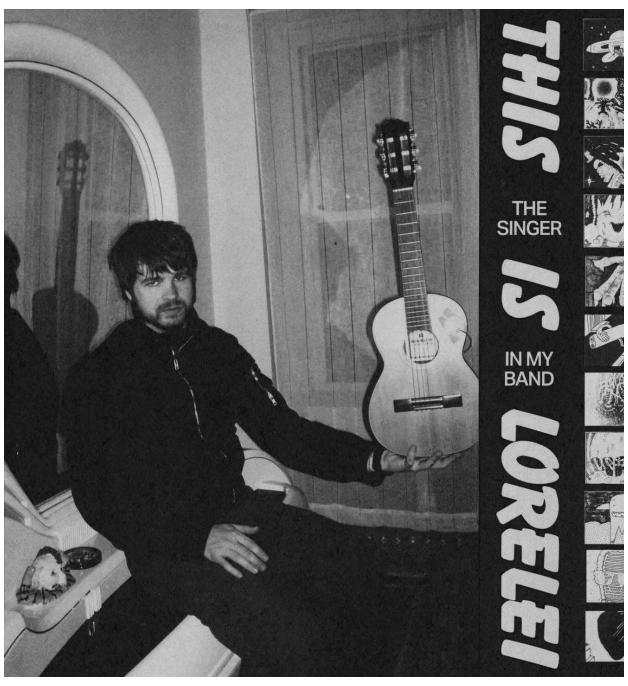
Amos' creative stretch as This Is Lorelei continues with his Matador Records debut, "The Singer in My Band," released on Friday, Sept. 11. Impressively, it's Amos' third year in a row releasing an album under the alias.

The opening "I Will Eat My Heart in the Morning Light," develops in an overt alt-country style, something Amos has flirted with in the past. A twangy electric guitar line drives the song forward but gradually falls to the background as an acoustic guitar countermelody takes over. Amos' voice stays steady as he sings about commitment to a lover, with each chorus trading his characteristic autotune for soft and subtle vocal layering.

Changing his sound around is nothing new for Amos, who's notoriously difficult to associate with a specific genre. But with recurring themes of indie pop structures and electronic elements, it's not surprising that the following two tracks, both singles, emerge with more immediate energy.

"Oh No Now My" begins with a strong sense of repetition, where the same instrumental melody and drum arrangement hold each part of the track together. Each longing call of "Oh no, now my Joey / I don't wanna let you miss this much" feels like getting slapped in the face with a hook, one that'll stay in your head for hours. A growing volume, along with psychedelic guitar licks and feedback, ensures the refrain stays fresh toward the end.

The equally catchy "Billy Came Back" features dazzling synths while Amos sings about the transfixing power of a singer named Billy, presumably a karaoke star. Amos' sister joins in for the chorus; the sibling duo seemingly mesmerized with Billy "like he's singing from the bottom of a deep blue sea."



The album cover for This Is Lorelei's new debut album, "The Singer in My Band." The album released Sept. 11, 2026.

PHOTO COURTESY OF "THIS IS LORELEI" ON FACEBOOK

Amos sings in a lighter and higher-pitched fashion on the following "Watching Heaven Fall," which is the closest he gets to sounding like his autotune past. While the opening tracks featured some stylistic shifts, the album's predominant sound finally emerges. The instrumental palette is nearly all acoustic, cultivating a pop-esque Americana experience. This comes as Amos dives into youthful disregard for religion in an ironically lighthearted fashion.

The forming genre theme accounts for less surprise when the title track takes things in a bluegrass direction, one that's no doubt inspired by his sister and father, who perform as a bluegrass duo. Amos' father performs the banjo that brings the song together, capturing the plight of a woman living in Texas when her heart belongs to Chicago.

"Hey Sarah Is It Gonna Rain Forever" boasts one of the most captivating progressions on the album. An intricate fingerstyle guitar melody kicks things off, but the wistful riff later takes turns in the spotlight with electric guitar playing and string arrangements instead. Despite the lightness, the track is one of the most somber on the record. Amos details a declining relationship where the speaker concludes: "my mouth won't speak, and I always get high / And my love feels weak."

The penultimate "And I Haven't Seen My Love in Quite a While" seems like an ordinary breakup story at first, where the speaker mourns a past relationship. But Amos flips the narrative on its head toward the end, revealing that the speaker had died and now writes songs about the woman he loved.

Despite the depressing undertones as he calls, "Lover, can you hear me though I cannot speak aloud? / For though I cannot hold you now, I'll never put you down," the jaunty acoustics make it clear the speaker has found some solace in his postmortem state. The sentiment pairs well with the instrumentally barren closer, "Don't You Cry in Lonesomeness," which could be interpreted as a musical attempt to comfort his partner.

With only 34 minutes, Amos still manages to deliver an onslaught of catchy hooks with varying instrumental intensity. While a less varied experience than his 2024 release, "Box for Buddy, Box for Star," the commitment to a specific style offers valuable consistency that makes each track truly belong next to one another.