

= My Transsexual Summer =

My Transsexual Summer is a British television documentary series about seven transgender people in different stages of transition . For five weekends in the summer of 2011 , they stay together in a large holiday home in Bedfordshire , England , where they meet and help each other with some of the struggles that transgender people face . Between these weekend retreats , they go back to their lives and real @-@ world challenges .

In the early 2010s , British public @-@ service broadcaster Channel 4 resolved to improve the accuracy and depth of their representation of transgender people . My Transsexual Summer was the first transgender programme they created after making this resolution . Channel 4 broadcast the series in November 2011 .

= = Production = =

In late 2010 , BBC and Channel 4 management at the Westminster Media Forum admitted that there are " high levels of inaccuracy " in media coverage of transgender people , and that " transgender storylines ... are frequently lacking in breadth and substance . " In March 2011 , Channel 4 became the first company to sign Trans Media Watch 's memorandum of understanding , in which they agreed to " work toward ... increasing positive , well @-@ informed representations of transgender people in the media . "

After signing the memorandum , Channel 4 engaged journalist / activist Paris Lees of Trans Media Watch to be a production consultant for the show ; Lees served as consultant for the duration of production .

Channel 4 chose the working title Girls Will Be Boys and Boys Will Be Girls . Mark Raphael , the commissioning editor for documentaries , contracted a British production company called Twenty Twenty Productions to make the series . Twenty Twenty was at the time a subsidiary of Shed Media . Former commissioning editor for documentaries Meredith Chambers served as executive producer for Channel 4 , and Sam Whittaker was executive producer for Twenty Twenty . The series producer and director was Helen Richards .

Filming began several weeks after the signing of the memorandum , and continued over a period of four months . My Transsexual Summer aired on Channel 4 in November 2011 .

= = Participants = =

The participants in the programme are four trans women and three trans men from different parts of the British Isles . They range in age from 22 to 52 ; five of the participants are under 30 .

Drew @-@ Ashlyn , a 22 @-@ year @-@ old trans woman from Wakefield , has been living as a woman for more than four years . Her family are supportive , but before the show she had never met another trans person ? let alone trans people near her own age . Donna is a 25 @-@ year @-@ old from Norwich . She and Drew have both been on hormone replacement therapy (HRT) for two years . Sarah (age 29) is from Jersey . She has only recently begun presenting as a woman full @-@ time ; during the course of the show , she comes out to her mother . Karen , from Essex , worked for many years as a police officer , and later as a lorry driver . She divorced in 1985 , and wants to be able to see her daughter again . At age 52 , she is about to undergo vaginoplasty .

Lewis (age 22) is from St Helens , Merseyside . Like Drew , he says he has never knowingly met another trans person before . He decided at age 18 to transition , and he has been living as a man for three years . Max is a 25 @-@ year @-@ old trans man from Tottenham . He is Reform Jewish , and hopes to become a rabbi . Max was living in New Zealand when he began preparing to undergo mastectomy . After seeking help locally , he had the procedure done in Thailand instead . Fox (age 30) is a screen printing artist from Brighton . He started HRT six months ago , and is all @-@ too aware that the hormones are slow to manifest visible changes .

= = Episodes = =

= = Response = =

Before the first episode aired , journalist Patrick Strudwick asked , " Channel 4 , why call your new documentary My Transsexual Summer ? It sounds like gender tourism , a fun little trip to the other side . " Sarah Dean , an entertainment editor for The Huffington Post UK , called the title " sensationalist " . Although Sarah Lake of Trans Media Watch found the title contentious , she defended it by pointing out that transition is a temporary process like coming of age ; even so , she believed the title to be " only slightly better " than the " dire and totally inappropriate " working title , Girls Will Be Boys and Boys Will Be Girls . Her overall assessment was that " although the programme makers undeniably made some compromises to draw in viewers , millions will have enjoyed the company of these seven , shared in their lives and learned a lesson in diversity . ? They will now have an entry point to broadening their understanding of the rich and joyful diversity of gender experience , something which has always existed but of which they were previously unaware . "

Politician and activist Zoe O 'Connell described some of the wording in the narration as " cringeworthy " , but felt that " it ? s more than just a step in the right direction , it ? s a programme that pretty accurately reflected how many trans people carry on with each other in private . "

Musician , activist , and writer CN Lester listed some ways in which the show perpetuated misconceptions or otherwise fell short , but still saw it as a turning point in the representation of transgender people on television : " It felt like a game changer . The overall feel of it ? of hope , of warmth ? that felt totally new to me . And hats off to the seven trans people ... for putting that across . "

When the second episode aired , transgender journalist Juliet Jacques posted her thoughts to the New Statesman 's politics blog , The Stagers : " At this point ... the limited level of improvement in trans representation on TV shown by My Transsexual Summer is probably the best we can expect . " She felt the major barriers to better representation to be " producers ' prejudices about what viewers will accept or understand " and extremely narrow bandwidth for " minority subjects " .

After seeing the first three episodes , Maxwell Zachs called the series " a disappointment " . One reason for this , he says , is that although " we see ... lovely , endearing transsexuals " portrayed in the show , " what I don ? t see is anything that is going to make people think or feel any differently about what gender is or how it limits us all in one way or another . " He lamented that expressions of nuance in gender identity and discussions of genderqueerness were absent from the broadcast edit of the show .

After the final episode aired , Juliet Jacques wrote a follow @-@ up article for Time Out . She concludes : " Perhaps in 30 years ' time , My Transsexual Summer will look as dated as [the 1980 documentary] A Change of Sex does now . If so , this will be because it has , for all its faults , taken trans @-@ related television in a more positive direction . "

= = Participants ' lives after the show = =

Less than a month after the final episode of My Transsexual Summer aired , Karen Gale delivered part of Channel 4 's 2011 Alternative Christmas message on Christmas Day . The theme of the broadcast was " Just Be Yourself " . In February 2016 , Karen 's local newspaper , the Romford Recorder , interviewed her about what life was like before she transitioned .

After filming the show , Drew @-@ Ashlyn Cunningham made speaking appearances at schools , universities , and youth groups . She became a supporter of Gendered Intelligence (a nonprofit organisation that aids trans youth) , and a " celebrity patron " of the 2012 and 2013 National Diversity Awards . In 2012 she became a make @-@ up artist for Illamasqua , and has also written for Gay Star News .

Donna Whitbread is a stage and festival performer . In 2014 , she joined the cast of cabaret act Ladyboys of London ? a company of three trans women plus four male dancers , with choreography

by Kamilah Beckles . They debuted at the Hippodrome Casino in London 's West End on the 29th of December , and Donna opened the show with a fire breathing act . One year later she announced that she has a role in John Cameron Mitchell 's film adaptation of " How to Talk to Girls at Parties " .

After her time with her new friends at the retreat , Sarah Savage was optimistic . " I left the retreat with a different outlook on life , I could feel my confidence growing , slowly . " She appeared on chat shows ITV Breakfast and Live with Gabby in 2011 , and returned to television in March 2013 as a guest on The Alan Titchmarsh Show . She took a job in Brighton , and has a blog that she started during the production of My Transsexual Summer . In the spring of 2013 , she started HRT . 2013 was also the inaugural year of Trans * Pride Brighton , the first transgender pride festival in the UK , and she and Fox Fisher served on the organisation committee . In 2015 Sarah and Fox published a picture book , Are You a Boy or are You a Girl ? , which Sarah wrote and Fox illustrated . " Before I started transitioning , I never wrote , I never ... did anything creative , " said Sarah in a 2013 interview . " For some reason ... living in a female role has allowed me to be more creative . "

Lewis Hancox ' fundraising events attracted donations from TV viewers ; among those who gave to the cause were Stephen Fry and Graham Norton . Later that year , Lewis began preparing for a more complicated gender @-@ confirmation surgery : metoidioplasty .

Lewis moved to London to study Digital Film and Video at London South Bank University . In 2013 , he and Fox Fisher started the My Genderation project , in which they make short documentaries about transgender people and gender variance . Their production company is called Lucky Tooth Films . The Independent on Sunday placed Lewis and Fox on their Pink List for 2013 , a list of " 101 gay , lesbian , bisexual and transgender people that make a difference " . In 2014 , The Guardian included Lewis on their " 30 under 30 " list of " top young people in digital media " .

Maxwell Zachs is a writer , Judaic studies scholar , and trans activist . Since 2011 he has written for various publications on subjects pertaining to gender and Judaism . In 2012 , he started a petition calling on the WHO to delist transsexualism from the International Classification of Diseases . After a period of charity work , he moved to Stockholm to study at Paideia , the European Institute for Jewish Studies in Sweden , on a one @-@ year fellowship . In 2013 , while living in Stockholm , he published some of his plays , as well as a dystopian novella called The People 's Republic of Nowhere .

Fox Fisher (aka Raphael Fox) continued to work as a freelance screen printer and visual artist . In addition to his creative projects with Lewis and Sarah , Fox began writing for The Huffington Post . Like Sarah , he felt a new creative freedom from transitioning : " It 's easier to make art now because I feel like I 've got a huge chunk of my life out of the way . "