

GOTH STANDS ON QUEER SHOULDERS; 22nd MAY 2026

As you may already be aware, World Goth Day was borne of a conversation between myself and DJ Martin Oldgoth in 2009. I won't bore you with the origin story, I will just refer you to the official World Goth Day website or numerous interviews & articles readily found online for further information about its roots. The conversation involved how we believed people in the Goth scene deserved a moment of visibility, connection & pride in something that has always existed outside the mainstream. We believed there should be a day for saying 'our culture exists, it matters, and the people within it matter'.

That context is important, because it explains why LGBTQ+ inclusion isn't a side issue. It's central to what goth has always been.

Goth has never just been about our music, our clothes or our books. It's about our identity, expression, and finding community when the rest of the world doesn't quite know where to put us. For decades, goth spaces have been places where people could explore gender, sexuality, and self-expression with less judgement than they faced elsewhere. It's one of the reasons many of us are here in the first place.

You may have noticed that the wider political and media climate is becoming more openly hostile towards queer people recently. Right-wing politicians and media outlets are increasingly framing LGBTQ+ people - particularly the trans community - as problems, as threats, or something that needs to be "debated". That kind of language isn't abstract, it's directly affecting people's safety, their mental health, and their sense of belonging.

Recently, some of that hostility has been leaking into places that used to feel safe. You see it in social media, in comments, in people testing the waters by "just asking questions" or trying to smuggle reactionary views in the guise of 'defence' against the very people their words affect. The Goth scene isn't immune to it - no scene is.

Alongside that, we've also seen a rise in misogyny within parts of the scene - often quieter, sometimes dismissed as "banter" or nostalgia, but felt very clearly by the women who experience it. Dismissing women's voices, policing how they look or participate, or framing their presence as something to be tolerated rather than respected runs directly against the idea of goth as a refuge.

It's also a statement of blind ignorance by those who seemingly ignore the glaring fact that the early female icons of Goth have always been emphatically strong women who are not afraid to speak up. A space that isn't safe for women and the LGBTQ+ community is never going to be safe for anyone else for long.

And that's why I felt that this message matters for World Goth Day this year.

If the world outside is becoming more divisive, we can't pretend it isn't happening. Neutrality in moments like this rarely feels neutral to the people who are on the receiving end of hostility. For queer goths, especially those who are trans or gender-nonconforming, silence will feel like abandonment even if that's not the intention. For women it will feel like the active rollback of basic rights they fought so hard to gain. More than ever before it seems, speaking up is essential.

As a co-founder I feel that World Goth Day should be clear on its stance and about where we believe the scene should stand. LGBTQ+ goths are not just guests here - they literally helped shape this culture. They helped build our clubs, ran our nights, create our music, DJ'd, wrote fanzines, organised events, and created our aesthetics, attitudes and personality that many of us have valued for decades.

In short, Goth stands on queer shoulders, words which would look great on a t-shirt, come to think of it.

So, we need to reaffirm something that should already be obvious: that homophobia, transphobia, misogyny and reactionary politics *do not belong in goth spaces*.

That involves being a bit more intentional than we might have been in the past. It can look like clearly stating that events are LGBTQ+ inclusive. It can look like calling things out when people cross lines, rather than quietly hoping it doesn't become a problem. And it *definitely* looks like backing queer people and all women when they say something doesn't feel safe or welcoming.

Some people will worry that doing this is "making things political" or "bringing drama into the scene". But the reality is that goth has always been political in the broadest sense, it has always pushed back against what's considered normal or acceptable. Claiming that the scene should be 'neutral' now often just means favouring the loudest voices who aren't even always the most marginalised.

World Goth Day is about visibility. As we speak, there are people watching from the edges - online, in clubs, or in their bedrooms - who are trying to work out whether this scene is still for them. So when we're clear about inclusion, we send a signal that goth remains a place where difference is valued.

I don't assume or expect every individual, or every event to get it right all the time. But it is about responsibility and trying. Subcultures only survive when we protect them from being hollowed out or co-opted by ideologies that run counter to their core values.

So in closing, as we celebrate World Goth Day this year, let's be honest with ourselves about what we want the scene to be.

Do we want it to remain a refuge for the people who don't fit in the mainstream, or let it become something that looks inclusive on the surface but feels hostile underneath?

World Goth Day has always been an annual celebration of collective identity. Inclusion works when the people who benefit *from* it help protect those who are more vulnerable *within* it. If you're queer and part of this scene, you shouldn't have to wonder whether you're welcome. If you're a woman, you should never need to worry about your equality being in question. You're seen, you're valued and this is still your space.

Happy World Goth Day, everyone.

DJ BatBoy Slim

co-founder, World Goth Day