



THE MAGAZINE FOR A DIFFERENT POINT OF VIEW

# IN TOUCH

Issue no. 35

FOR MEN

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**JOHN TRAVOLTA**

*"Be still, my beating heart"*

**HOUSTON**

*Thinking big*

**HENRY WINKLER**

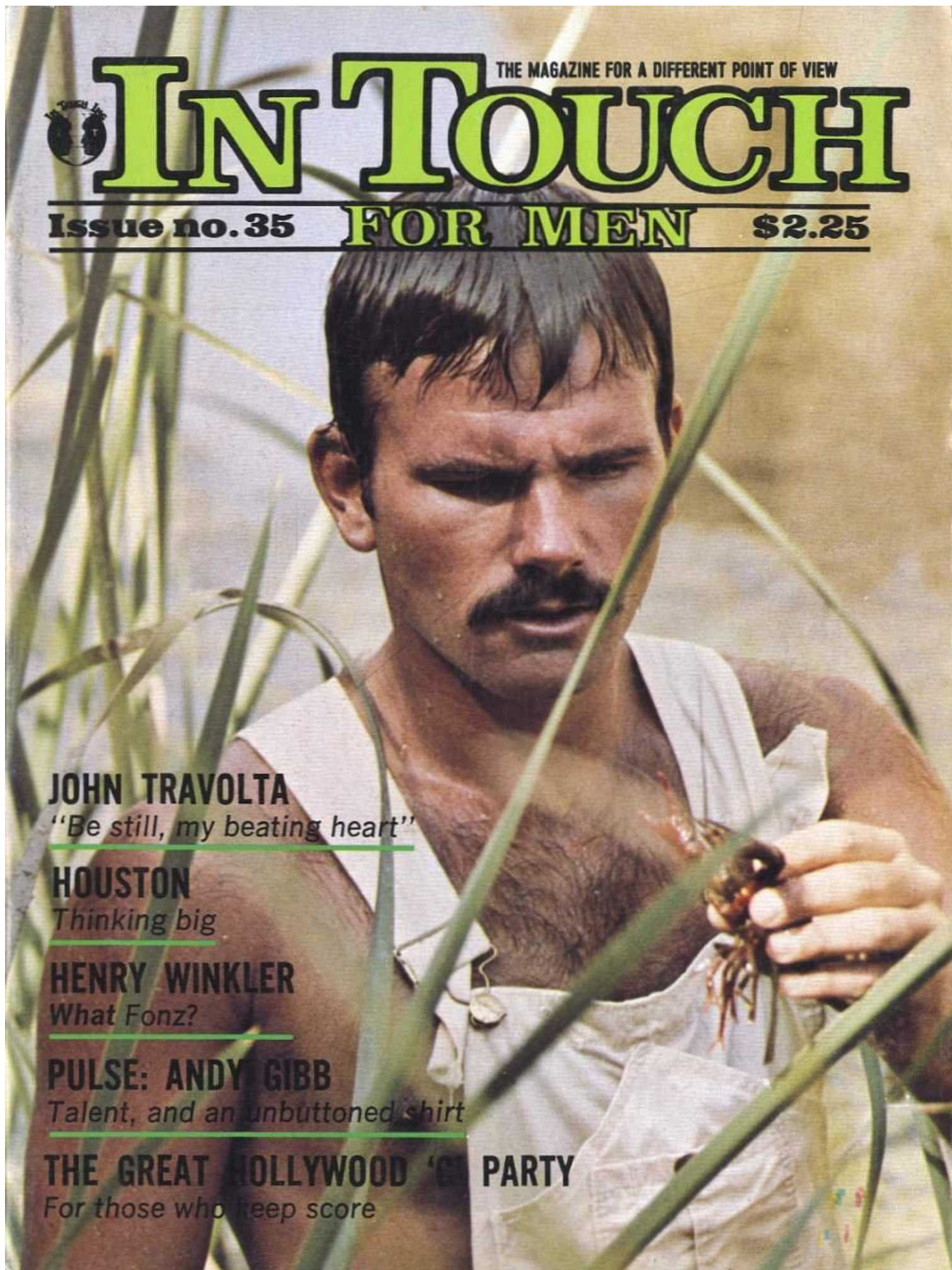
*What Fonz?*

**PULSE: ANDY GIBB**

*Talent, and an unbuttoned shirt*

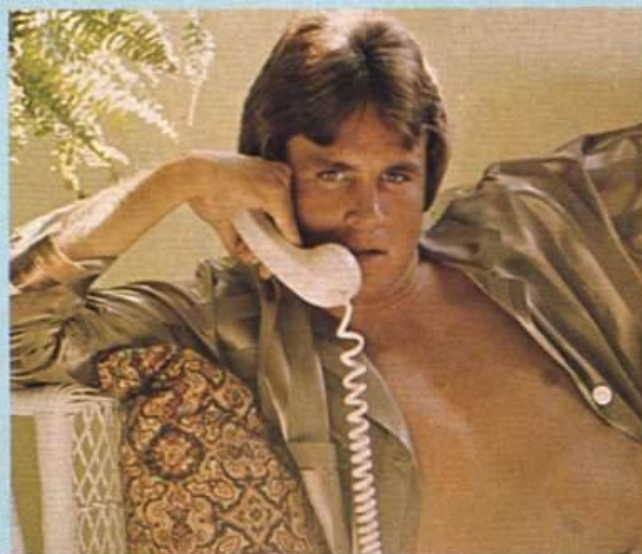
**THE GREAT HOLLYWOOD 'C' PARTY**

*For those who keep score*



# IN TOUCH FOR MEN

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## Issue no. 35

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# HOUSTON

Space and energy—they're more than major industries in Texas' fastest-growing city: they represent the attitude of Houston's burgeoning gay community and the men on these pages who live in it.

By Bill Whiting

In every age of America's history there has been a city that epitomized the era; in colonial America it was Philadelphia; in the post-World War II period Los Angeles held the distinction; in the late 1970's and beyond, the city is and will be Houston, the city of the energy crisis. Only dynamic Houston, located where the great southern pine forests meet the Gulf Coastal Plains of South Texas, contains all the elements of urban life in America of the late Twentieth Century.

True, Houston looks in many ways no different from any of the dozen or so cities that grew up in the image of Los Angeles following the Second World War, but on closer examination the differences become obvious. First of all, the city's economy is based on energy—the single most important concern of contemporary America. A

short drive down any of a several downtown streets will put you in the shadows of the national or international corporate headquarters of the largest of this nation's energy (that is read "oil," though their holdings in non-petroleum energy sources are increasing rapidly) firms: Exxon, Shell, Texaco, Gulf, and Pennzoil are only a few.

Secondly, an attempt to negotiate the city's freeway system puts even the casual observer in mind of the deepening energy crisis in which we find ourselves. Drivers jump from lane to lane without regard for safety, courtesy, or the speed limit, aptly symbolizing our own national race headlong toward petroleum depletion without a national energy policy. Probably the most important thing to remember about Houston's freeways is that A. J. Foyt learned to drive on them, and a number of

the locals think they are at the Indy 500 every time they enter.

So be careful if you decide to drive when you get to town, as you undoubtedly will do because of the third criterion setting Houston off from the remainder of the post-war cities—i.e. the growth of multiple city centers. Houston is a city that has not one but a number of downtowns; whether you are in the traditional city center, in the amazing Galleria—where you might just run into the president of France or Egypt, the Empress of Iran, or perhaps some local oilman in town to do a little shopping before hopping onto the jet to go home—in the uptown area where Joe Louis or the Duchess of Windsor are frequent visitors to the medical complex (which boasts both Michael DeBakey and Denton Cooley, world renowned heart specialists), or in





The Men of Houston photos by Ken Towle



any of a half-dozen other urban centers within the city, you will experience a city unlike any other in the entire United States — Houston, queen city of the Sun Belt.

Did I say queen city? Well, actually, that is just what Houston has come to be. In recent years a substantial number of the 5000 people who move to Houston each month have been gay. Recent estimates by both gay and straight authorities have placed Houston's gay population between 250,000 and 300,000, making it one of the four largest gay cities in the United States. Most of Houston's overtly gay residents live in an area near the city's center, known as The Montrose. This formerly elegant neighborhood has over the years been home to a number of the better known men our nation has produced: Howard Hughes (his home is now part of the University of Saint Thomas campus and his grave is nearby in the beautiful old Glenwood Cemetary on Washington Ave. — a good place for a picnic lunch during the 10 months of summer that Houston usually experiences), Walter Cronkite, and even Clark Gable (he was a plumber when he lived on Hopkins St.).

Currently Montrose is the area of the city most likely to harbor the nightclubs, galleries, museums, parks, and street corners you will want to visit while here. Wherever you happen to plan on playing during your visit to Houston, be sure to dress appropriately — that is T-shirt and cut-offs in most cases. About the only time you will not be dressed this casually is when you attend the performances of the local ballet or opera in Jones Hall. These nationally known and respected companies have for the past three years been in the forefront of America's cultural scene. The Houston Grand Opera has given Broadway its biggest hits in 1976 and 1977 and is currently touring the nation with a new *Hello Dolly* starring Carol Channing. The ballet has featured Gwen Verdon as well as creating and producing *Caliban*, a critically acclaimed rock ballet based on Shakespeare's *The Tempest*.

When gay people come to Houston for a visit they always want to know where they can go to have an enjoyable evening with people of their own kind. Fortunately, there are a multitude of places to go and gay things to do. Before we begin our brief tour of Energy City's gay playgrounds there is a word of warning that should be given. In addition to all the wonderful entertainments available, Houston also boasts

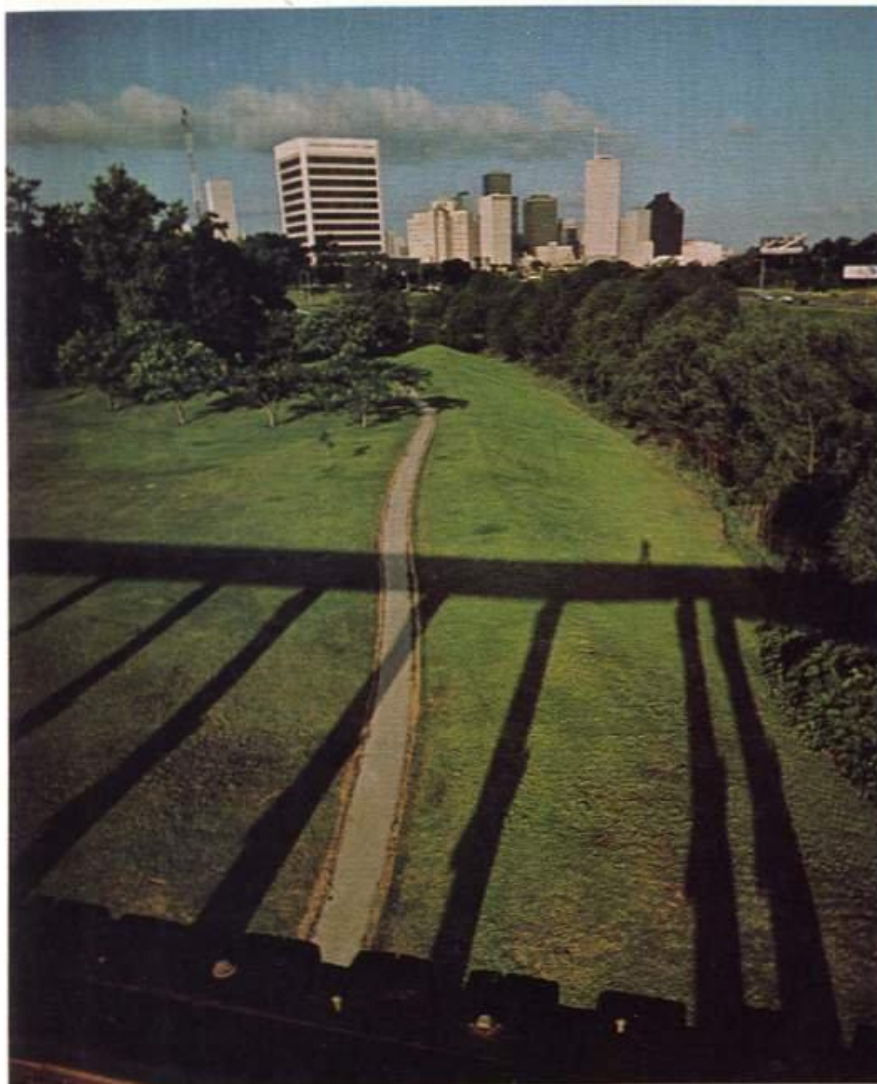


Glass towers reflect one another endlessly in the canyons of Houston streets.

Photo by Ken Towles



Houston bars (shown above is the Silver Bullet before its fire) offer something for everyone.



Bicycle trails — this one on Buffalo Bayou — let local gays combine exercise and fun.

Photo by Ken Towles

a police force that is, to put it mildly, not exactly pro-gay. So just be careful, and if you go to one of the numerous movie arcades and find that long tall cowboy you were looking for, just be sure you choose a booth with a lockable door and then lock it. If, on the other hand, you find him in one of our famous backroom bars, go somewhere else or you may find that the two of you get a tour of Police Headquarters from the inside.

Since "gotta dance" has been the middle name of every gay man I have ever met, I suppose the proper place to begin this short tour is in the biggest disco in the city. **The Old Plantation** (2020 Kipling) is easily the oldest and most successful dance bar around here. It features a large, easily viewed dance floor and several bars all in one level as well as a crowd of people which is one of the best-looking groups you will find anywhere. Just around the corner is **The Cove** (2920 S. Shepherd) a fifties deco dance palace with big weekend crowds of people from all sections of the city.

**Cuddles** (4714 S. Main), over on the other side of the Montrose, is the other large disco club in Houston. It is a multi-level playhouse which includes not only dancing and games, but a boutique, giant TV, and fabulous light shows. The other popular disco is the **Midnite Sun** (534 Westheimer) on restaurant row. The people here are generally young or looking for someone

(continued on page 96)



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## HOUSTON

(continued from page 35)

who is, and can be loads of fun. If you are just into town and looking for a small dance bar to get your feet wet before you hit the biggies, this may be just the place for you.

For those who are looking for a club which does not happen to be a disco, there are a number available. The **Inside-Outside** (1318 Westheimer), not far from the Midnite Sun, is excellent. It features both a cruise bar, a patio, a piano bar, and a western bar, the **Countryside**, across the patio. The people there are friendly and a good cross-section of Houston. A short stroll from there is **Mary's** (1022 Westheimer), the best known cruise bar in town. It is famous for raunch and during the summer the patio rocks on Sunday afternoons.

Another short walk away is **The Silver Bullet Saloon** (1005 California), recently burned to the ground by an unknown arsonist. The Bullet had been one of the hot spots of the gay community. The Bullet is still open on the patio, and rebuilding should have begun by the time this magazine is on the streets, so be sure and go by as something may be happening there. Another popular club a bit further down is **The Locker** (1732 Westheimer), a cruise bar with a bit of raunch in its decor.

Also located here is **Q-1 Leathers**, where you can get anything you want in leather goods, from pants made to order to a custom-fitted cock-ring. The Locker is only open in the evenings, so go after 3 p.m. and be sure to visit the patio with its stage and fort for whatever your fantasy may be.

If bars are not your bag, Houston also has two baths and a locker club for your pleasure. The largest and most innovative bath in town is the **Midtowne Spa** (100 Fannin), with an indoor pool, weight room with instructors, four orgy rooms, movies, 65 individual rooms and a host of other surprises. The smaller **Club Houston** (2205 Fannin) is a delightful mix of contemporary fun on three levels and offers an abundance of pleasures in the shadow of downtown. Both baths are open around the clock. The **2306** (2306 Genesee), located in the heart of the Montrose, is a brand new locker club. Open only after 8 p.m., it offers pleasures aimed at real men who can enjoy their fantasies in cells and glory hole booths, not to mention a bathtub for whatever you care to do in it.

After your evening in the baths or bars there are several restaurants you can visit that are as cruisy as any of the places already mentioned. The **Somewhere Restaurant** (1525 Westheimer) near the Inside-

year-round all-gay retreat featuring bar-dancing-hotel

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