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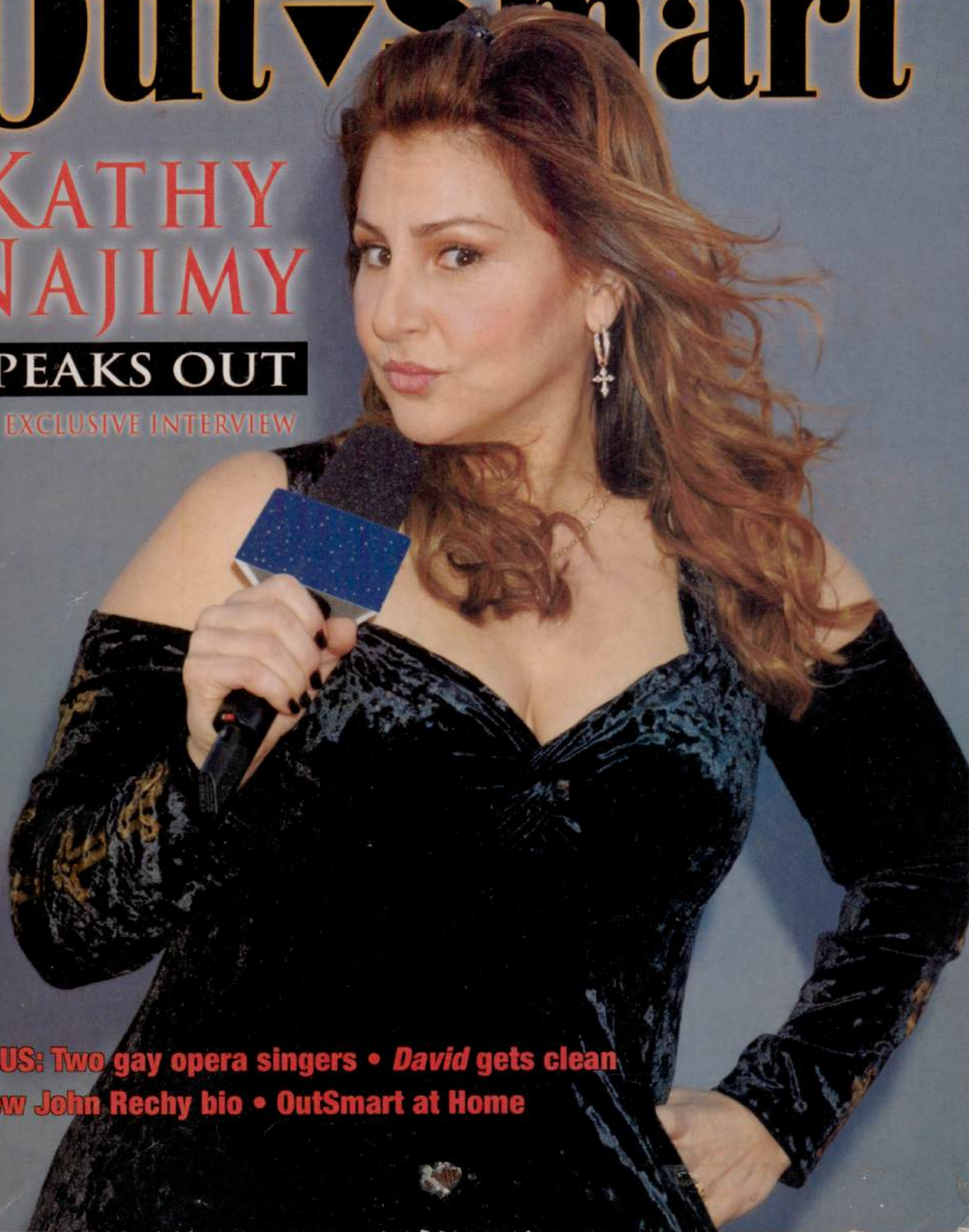
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About the cover:

Kathy Najimy speaks out on the eve her appearance at the November 15 Houston Black Tie Dinner. Photograph by Kathy Hutchins/Hutchins Photo. Cover designed by Terry Klumpp.

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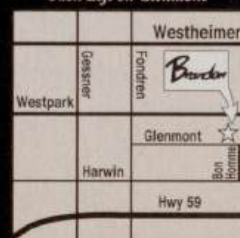
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OutFront

SAY THEIR NAMES.
On November 20, Cheyenne Griffin (pictured) will join the candlelight vigil at City Hall marking Day of Remembrance. For the fifth year, the observance—and many similar events around the world—will memorialize individuals murdered as a result of anti-transgender hate. “We’ve got about 33 names to read this year—so far,” Vanessa Edwards Foster, Houston-based chair of the National Transgender Advocacy Coalition, reported recently. Griffin is active in the group HTGA (Helping TransGenders Anonymous).

Photographed by David Lewis



MOVING NIGHT. Last year, Dominic Walsh Dance Theater and Hope Stone Dance premiered *The Illumination Project*, an extraordinary and powerful World AIDS Day event. On December 1, the companies will present their second annual commemorative performance at DiverseWorks. For the evening, choreographer Paola Georgudis created a work for (clockwise from top) Marcello de sa Martins, Walsh, and Manuel Barra. Proceeds will support the Baylor College of Medicine Pediatric AIDS Initiative and A Caring Safe Place. See page 16 for more World AIDS Day activities.

Photographed at Houston Ballet Academy by John Conroy

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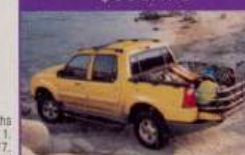
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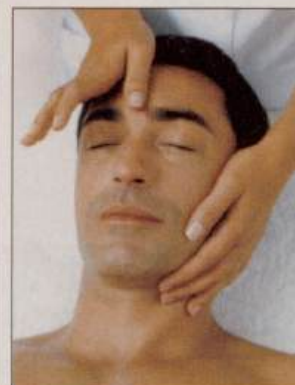
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MAJOR PROJECT. Reagan Miller, a senior theater major at High School for the Performing and Visual Arts, is spreading the word about his school's production of *The Laramie Project*. The drama, which recounts the aftermath of the Matthew Shepherd murder, still sears five years after brutal killing. "I think it is a beautiful, brave thing that a high school is taking on this piece," Miller says. Working behind the scenes, Miller is also helping actors prepare the intense monologues for the December 3-9 show.

Photographed at HSPVA by David Lewis



TO LIFE

"Live and Let Live." is the theme of World AIDS Day 2003, as designated by the World AIDS Campaign. On December 1, the United Nations program (www.unaids.org) encour-



ages individuals to focus on the stigma and discrimination that affects people living with HIV/AIDS. In Houston, observances of the 15th World AIDS Day include the following:

NOVEMBER 30

Religious Services. Many churches will focus on the AIDS crisis during regular services, including Grace Lutheran (2515 Waugh).

Tree of Remembrance. Last year, the Houston GLBT Community Center and the Gulf Coast Archive & Museum of GLBT History (GCAM) partnered to resume the lighting of the Tree of Remembrance, once presented annually by the now-disbanded NAMES Project Houston. The center (3400 Montrose Blvd., Suite 207) continues this community tradition with a 6 p.m. lighting ceremony. Individuals may bring ornaments in memory of loved ones and hang them on the tree, which will remain on view at the center through December. Info: 713/524-3818.

DECEMBER 1

Television Programming. Houston MediaSource, the community access station, will present 24 hours of programming—sponsored by KPFT 90.1FM Pacifica and *OutSmart*—related to HIV/AIDS. Features will include a forum, simulcast on KPFT, hosted by Ray Hill.

Positive Art Workshop Exhibition. The Houston GLBT Community Center will present art created by adults with HIV/AIDS who participate in the bimonthly art program as well as



James Bettison (1956–1997) drew *Lady Frog No. 1 (Carolyn Frog)* in 1993.

COURTESY NEW GALLERY

paintings by workshop director Ryan Fugate, noon–9 p.m. Info: 713/524-3818.

Memorial Ornament Display. When it folded, the local NAMES Project chapter gave GCAM the ornaments that adorned the Tree of Remembrance in the past. In December, the archive will exhibit a

selection of the objects in its Houston GLBT Community Center display.

World AIDS Day Luncheon. AIDS Foundation Houston will host the annual fundraising event, 11:30–1 p.m., at The Houstonian Hotel (111 N. Post Oak Lane). Individual ticket prices begin at \$150, \$1,500 for a table of 10. Reservations: 713/623-6796, ext. 278.

Remembrance Tree. Thomas Street Clinic (2015 Thomas) will host an 11 a.m. ceremony for individuals who want to hang ornaments on a tree in memory of loved ones. The event will include a reading of names of people lost to AIDS. Info: 713/873-4000.

Paper Quilt. Through December 5, the Montrose Counseling Center (701 Richmond) will display a memorial quilt of panels created on card stock by staff, clients, and others. Info: 713/529-0037.

Health Fair. The UH Wellness program will host an 11 a.m.–1 p.m. health fair at the University Center (4800 Calhoun).

Montrose Clinic will participate. In addition, UH Wellness will display panels from the NAMES Project AIDS Memorial Quilt and hold a 5 p.m. candlelight march. Info: 713/743-5455.

Candlelight Vigil. The city will organize the 5–7 p.m. event at Jones Plaza (600 Smith). →

One Voice

Cabaret singer Scott Winnett will perform his show *I'll Be Here Tomorrow: Songs from and for the AIDS Crisis* on November 16 at Bering Memorial United Methodist Church. Winnett, who teaches voice at the University of Houston, recently presented his show in San Diego. Admission to the 7:30 show is \$20. All proceeds will benefit the Bering Support Network.



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DATEBOOK

• **Stonewall Law Association of Greater Houston** presents the Alternative Family Law Seminar on Nov. 7, 7:30 a.m.-5:30 p.m., at University of Houston Law Center. Mark Strasser, legal authority on same-sex marriage equality, is keynote speaker. Register: www.slagh.org/cle.htm.

• On Nov. 8 at Montrose Clinic, **Lesbian Health Initiative** hosts its 2003 Rainbow Health Fair targeting LGBT women. Details: www.lhihouston.org, 713/603-0023.

• **Houston Tennis Club** presents the HOUTEX tournament Nov. 8-10 at the Memorial Park tennis facilities and Lee LeClear Tennis Center. Register: www.houstontennisclub.org.

• Representatives from the New York headquarters of **Gay Lesbian & Straight Education Network** will lead a Nov. 15 workshop, presented by the No-Hate group and H.A.T.C.H., for students and teachers interested in forming gay/straight alliances. Details: 713/529-3590.

• On Nov. 8 at the Rhythm Room, the local stop of the cross-country tour presented by Houston-based **GoGirlsMusic.com** will benefit Rock 'n' Roll Camp for Girls in Oregon.

• The **Lesbian & Gay Immigration Rights Task Force** meets at 8 p.m. on the second Tuesday of the month at Bering Memorial United Methodist Church, Room 230. Details: 713/426-3128.

• By the time you read this, the Nov. 4 municipal elections may be history. We once more salute openly lesbian candidates **Annise Parker**, the city council rep (and *OutSmart* contributor) who stood for city controller, and **Sue Lovell**, who challenged for an at-large council position. ■

World AIDS Day continued from page 14

Expected speakers include Mayor Lee Brown and U.S. Rep. Sheila Jackson Lee.

The Illumination Project. DiverseWorks (1117 East Freeway), in conjunction with Dominic Walsh Dance Theater and Hope Stone Dance, will present a 7:30 p.m. performance benefiting the Pediatric AIDS Initiative of Baylor College of Medicine and A Caring Safe Place. Tickets are \$35. Reservations: 713/526-1907, ext. 3.

In the Key of Hope. The nonprofit Warren Corporation and TwinPlus Productions will present a 5-6:30 p.m. health fair followed by a 7 p.m. gospel concert at St. Agnes Baptist Church (3730 South Acres). Tickets: \$15-

\$50. Proceeds benefit the HIV-education and mentoring initiative Love Black Kids. Details: 713/541-9777, 832/419-6883.

DECEMBER 2

Concert. Bering Omega Community Services will present a Houston Symphony chamber group in a free concert at Bering Memorial United Methodist Church (1440 Harold). Info: 713/524-9304, ext. 103.

Converging in Houston. DiverseWorks and Voices Breaking Boundaries will present an 8 p.m. program curated by artists and activists focusing on the global AIDS crisis and impact on Houston. Featured artists include Chuck Jackson, Michael Peranteau, Kris Peterson, Beena Sarwar, and Sixto Wagan. Tickets are \$7, \$5 for seniors. Reservations: 713/335-3445. ■

OFF LINE



Signed off:
Brandon Wolf folded
Han-Net on November 1.

On November 1, Brandon Wolf pulled the plug on the web community he launched on November 16, 1998.

The online chat-and-discussion group Houston Activist Network, commonly known as Han-Net, had 266 members at its demise. Its influence extended beyond numbers. Many of the netizens fell into the category once characterized by mayoral liaison Janine Brunjes as "leaders and self-appointed leaders." Information disseminated on Han-Net often got disseminated outside the cyber bounds.

Despite the frequent flames and increasingly angry-to-irrational political

sparring, Han-Net demonstrated the value of the Internet for community organizing. As Wolf's creation ended, an interview conducted by e-mail is especially apt.

How did you come to start Han-Net?

The idea first occurred to me in fall 1997, when I received an activist e-mail from the late Gary Van Otteghem. He had cc'd about 50 local activists. When I hit "Reply," it sort of blew my mind that communication could have become so quick.

In my career, I work a lot with people who are involved in process re-invention,

Han-Net continued on page 81

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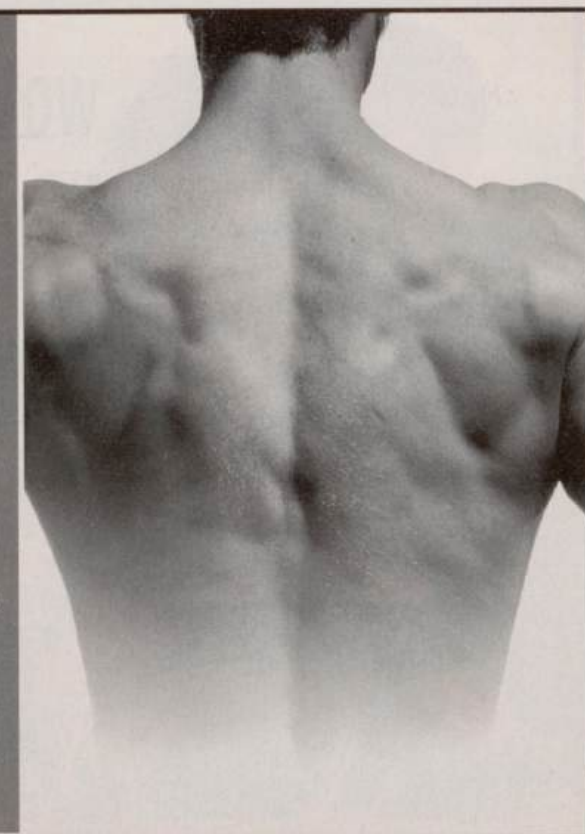
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TALK THE TALK

Rush Limbaugh is a big fat drug addict

What a rush for liberals! Finding out that Rush Limbaugh is a big fat drug addict is like catching Karl Rove at a leather bar, getting bitch-slapped by John Ashcroft, and learning that both of them liked it.

After all these years of hearing that pious bastard rail on addicts for being weak and for refusing to take responsibility for themselves, we find out that the mouthpiece of the virtuous right—Rush Limbaugh—is powerless over “Hillbilly heroin.” How appropriate.

At this very moment, Rush is somewhere in a Dogpatch treatment center, sitting in a room full of fellow addicts, detoxing and wondering, “Dude, where’s my talk show?”

I think I’ll send Rush some reading materials. He should have plenty of time to read in rehab, and he should be able to get through quite a few books in 28 days. Maybe *Valley of the Dolls*, *Fear and Loathing in Las*

Vegas, and *Postcards from the Edge* would be inspirational.

Or maybe he can’t read yet. Maybe he’s still floating around his \$5,000/day room, in Versace pajamas, tripping the lights fantastic.

What are Rush Limbaugh’s hallucinations like anyway? Are they pleasant? Like Vaseline-lensed visions of Nancy Reagan comforting him and telling him to “Just Say No” while Barbara Bush kisses him on the cheek and gently tucks him into his goose-down bed?

Or are they horrible? Does he visualize Janet Reno alligator-wrestling him to the floor while Nurse Hillary moves in with a cold-coffee enema for Barney Frank to stick in?

Who participates in Rush’s group therapy? Is there any diversity, or is it just a bunch of rich white people sitting around in a circle trying to preempt public humiliation

by claiming they’re addicted to whatever.

“Hi, my name is Rush. I’m powerless over Oxy80.”

“Hi, I’m Dick Cheney. I’m powerless over Halliburton stock options.”

“Hi, my name is Rick Perry. I’m powerless over hairspray, and this is my friend, Orlando Sanchez. He’s powerless over base makeup and eyeliner.”

“Hi, I’m Tom DeLay. I’m powerless over bug spray.”

And so on.

It’s hard to imagine Rush acknowledging that he’s not perfect—
continued on page 22

Writing from the liberal end of the spectrum, Houston attorney Daryl Moore has a general practice and is board certified in civil and appellate law. He can be reached at DarylMoore@outsmartmagazine.com.



A GOOD DEFENSE

Four points counter the Federal Marriage Amendment

It’s time to start marshaling our arguments against the Federal Marriage Amendment (FMA). The FMA, which has now been introduced in the House of Representatives, would define marriage in the United States as the union of one man and one woman. It would henceforth ban gay marriages (and other forms of legal recognition of gay couples) throughout the country—at least until the amendment could be repealed, something that has happened only once in more than two centuries of constitutional history. Passage of the FMA would set back the cause of gay marriage for perhaps 25–50 years, possibly for the lifetime of most people reading this column.

The theory of the FMA seems to be that the states must be saved from themselves, from their own legislatures, from their own courts, and from their own people, lest they formally recognize gay relationships. Whatever one thinks of same-sex marriage as a

matter of policy, no person who cares about our Constitution should support this amendment. It is unnecessary, contrary to the structure of our federal system, anti-democratic in a peculiar way, and a form of overkill.

The central argument against the FMA is that allowing gay marriage would be a good thing, for gays and society. But here are four arguments against the FMA that even an opponent of gay marriage should be able to accept:

First, a constitutional amendment is unnecessary. It is a solution in search of a problem. No state in the union has yet recognized same-sex marriages. Even if and when a state court approved same-sex marriage in its own jurisdiction, that can and should be a matter for a state to resolve internally, through its own governmental processes, as in fact the states have been doing.

Supporters of the FMA argue that the Constitution’s full faith and credit clause

might be used to impose gay marriage on the country. That clause requires each state to give “full faith and credit” to the “public acts, records and judicial proceedings” of other states. But this clause has never been interpreted to mean that every state must recognize every marriage performed in every other state. Each state may refuse to recognize a marriage performed in another state if that marriage would violate the state’s public policy. Thirty-seven states have already declared it is their public policy not to recognize same-sex marriages. →

Writing from the conservative end of the political spectrum, Dale Carpenter began his column for OutSmart in 1994, when he lived in Houston. Now residing in Minneapolis, Carpenter is a University of Minnesota Law School professor. He can be reached at OutRight@aol.com.

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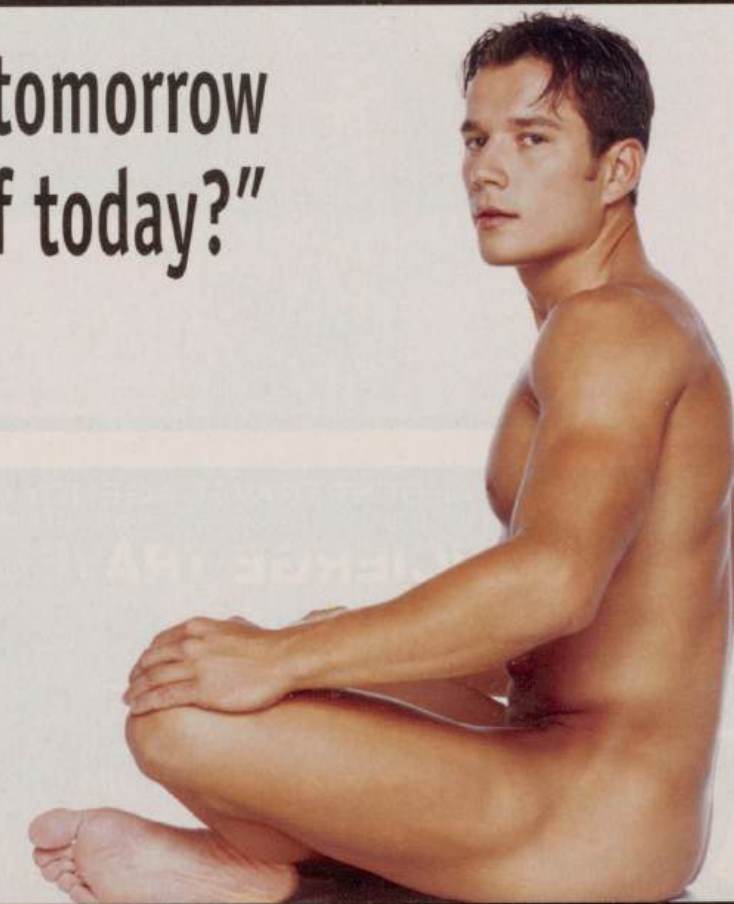
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LeftOut

continued from page 20

that he has some flaw, some weakness, which is essential in every 12-step program. Can you really hear Rush working any of the steps and saying:

"I believe in a power greater than myself."

"I acknowledge my shortcomings and humbly ask God to remove them."

"I have made a list of all the persons I have harmed, and I am willing to make amends to all of them."

"I have made a personal inventory and, when I was wrong, I promptly admitted it."

Indeed, it's hard to imagine Rush Limbaugh with any humility at all. Does he remember all the times he denigrated addicts as "weak people" who simply refused to exercise any self-control? Does he remember saying that "if people are violating the law by doing drugs, they ought to be accused and they ought to be convicted and they ought to be sent up"?

And, if he does, will he give himself up to John Ashcroft when he is discharged? Doubtful, since he hired Roy Black—who defended the Kennedy cousin in the Florida rape charge—to represent him. It sure seems like a waste of money to hire a good lawyer just to admit you're guilty and take your lumps.

Sarcasm aside, I wish Rush would recover. I wish he would kick his Oxy habit. I wish he would learn the hard way that the weak need a hand up, not a hand out. And I wish he would share his newfound humility with his 30 million listeners when he returns to talk radio.

Hi. I'm Daryl. I'm powerless over wishful thinking. ■

OutRight

continued from previous page

It is also unlikely the Supreme Court or the federal appellate courts, for the foreseeable future, would declare a constitutional right to same-sex marriage. Lawrence v. Texas, the recent sodomy decision, does not change this. Lawrence involved the most private of acts (sexual conduct) in the most private of places (the home). By contrast, marriage is a public institution freighted with public meaning and significance. If I gave my first-year constitutional law students an exam question asking them to distinguish Lawrence from a decision favoring same-sex marriage, I am very confident they could do so.

Moreover, if the Court were suddenly to order nationwide same-sex marriage, it would be taking on the entire country, something it almost never does. We should

not tamper with the Constitution to deal with hypothetical questions as if it were part of some national law-school classroom.

Second, a constitutional amendment would mark a radical intrusion on federalism. States have traditionally controlled their own family law. The nation's commitment to this federalism is enshrined in our Constitution's very structure.

But federalism is not valuable simply as a tradition. It has a practical benefit. It allows the states to experiment with public policies, to determine whether they work. That is happening right now. States are trying a variety of approaches to test whether encouraging stable same-sex unions is, on balance, a good or bad thing.

Repudiating our history, the FMA would prohibit state courts or even state legislatures from authorizing same-sex marriages. It might even prevent state courts from enforcing domestic partnership or civil union laws.

Third, the FMA would be peculiarly anti-democratic. Simple majority rule is the strong presumption of democracies. But, as conservative legal scholar Bruce Fein recently wrote, "that presumption and its purposes would be defeated by the constitutional rigidity and finality of a no-same-sex-marriage amendment."

While all constitutional amendments constrain democratic politics, the FMA would mark the first time in the nation's history the Constitution was amended to limit democratic decisions designed to make the states more inclusive and more affirming of individual rights. The FMA reflects a deeply anti-democratic impulse, a fundamental distrust of normal political processes.

Fourth, the FMA is constitutional overkill. It is like hauling out a sledgehammer to kill a gnat. Even if I have been wrong about the imminent likelihood of a court-imposed gay marriage revolution, the FMA is not a carefully tailored response to that problem. A much narrower amendment, dealing only with preserving state's control on the issue, could be proposed. Even such a narrower amendment, however, would be unnecessary.

In sum, the FMA is not a response to any problem we currently have. Never before in the history of the country have we amended the Constitution in response to a threatened or actual state court decision. Never before have we adopted a constitutional amendment to limit the states' ability to control their own family law. Never before have we amended the Constitution to restrict the ability of the democratic process to expand individual rights. This is no time to start. ■

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by Annise D. Parker

TEXAS AND DRAINAGE

Tough tests face a divided council

Local elections, budget deficits and proposed tax cuts, drainage fees, and rail: Nowhere but Houston. These are the most stressful of times at City Hall.

Like many cities in this uncertain economy, Houston faces a budget shortfall of at least \$10 million in the current budget. This year's financial crisis had been brewing for a couple of months by early October when council was set to vote on two of the hottest issues in my council tenure: another tax cut and a drainage fee.

Whether you pay any attention to politics or not, every Houstonian is affected by the city budget deficit and the tax rate, 65.5 cents per \$100 valuation. Do you care how fast the police or fire truck responds to your call? Does it matter if the nearest library is open when you need it or how long you have to wait for an appointment at a city clinic?

While many cities, including major Texas cities and counties, are raising taxes to help

combat deficits, Houston teetered on the verge of cutting taxes and city services. Fortunately, council came to its senses and rejected the reckless rollback proposals.

Another one-cent cut would mean about \$10 a year for the average homeowner, but

**Isn't there fat
that could be cut in the
Houston city budget? Sure.
But we've been cutting back
for three years.**

would reduce city revenues by \$10 million and lead to service cuts. Unless there's a reversal in our flat sales-tax revenues (25 percent of the budget), service cuts could become a reality in the near future. We've already cut library hours, and not reopened a health clinic

closed for mold remediation. What's next?

Most cities are facing budget deficits in the wake of declining sales taxes, shrinking pension funds, escalating health insurance costs, and ballooning police and fire contracts. With a \$95 million deficit, Dallas laid off employees, rescinded a 10-percent raise, and hiked taxes three cents last year. With the state's highest property values, Austin just approved a 7-percent property tax hike. San Antonio and Fort Worth just voted to retain their tax rates. Fort Worth already has the highest tax rate (86.5 cents per \$100 valuation) of any major Texas city.

Isn't there fat that could be cut in the Houston city budget? Sure. But we've been cutting back for three years. Already, about 200 people have been laid off. About 1,400 positions have been eliminated. Like any successful diet, losing fat instead of muscle takes time. All non-work-related travel has been eliminated. Take-home cars, printing, and publi-

cations have been trimmed dramatically.

By the time you read this article, the mayor probably will have proposed \$10 million in cuts. Council will suggest other cuts. What will finally pass is anyone's guess, but I will do everything I can to ensure that any cuts are in the best interest of the city.

Drainage Fee

I voted for the drainage fee because I believe it is the most economical way for all of Houston's overburdened taxpayers to pay for our massive drainage needs, estimated at more than \$1 billion.

The city does not currently have the money to pay for them and cannot just add such a massive program to a future Capital Improvement Program bond issue without knowing it will be able to repay that debt. Until the 9-6 vote, Houston was the only major Texas city without a drainage fee.

I wish the city had not spent the \$325 million in excess water and sewer funds on unrelated projects over the past decade. I have spoken out and voted against robbing the water and sewer fund and led the charge, along with council member Bruce Tatro, to end that practice. Unfortunately, that was the source of the minimal drainage work we're doing. The drainage fee will cover that as well as debt financing of a massive list of

projects in our drainage master plan.

My drainage fee vote was contingent on two actions: that the city develop more stringent prohibitions on development in the floodplains and that the city review all aspects of its development ordinance to prevent future construction from perpetuating current drainage problems;

I have repeatedly called for a set of new guidelines to change the way development is handled in the city so that we don't create a new drainage program to fix some of the flooding problem while continuing to create more flooding with our inadequate development practices. Recommendations from the Greater Houston Partnership and the public works department are expected by the end of the year. These changes are needed:

- use of new floodplain maps;
- more detention and retention;
- more capacity in the storm-water infrastructure;
- more permeable surface;
- a plan for ongoing maintenance of the detention.

As much as council wanted a sunset clause in the fee, bond advisers told the city not to include such a specific clause. Instead, the drainage program will be reviewed annually. Council also voted to apply the fee

to all property with no exceptions.

As you may know, the recent engineering study recommended the following drainage fees, all based on ERUs (equivalent runoff units). Most homeowners will pay \$2 a month extra on their water bills beginning in February.

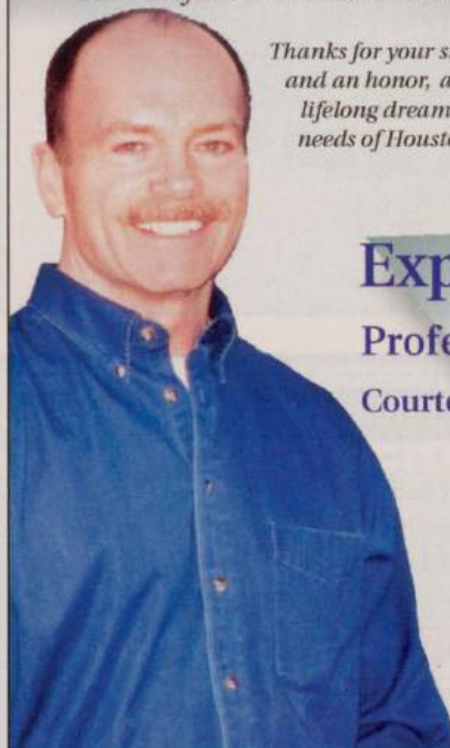
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1.0 ERU • \$2 mo.
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9.6 ERU/acre • \$19.20 mo.
Transportation/utility
2.3 ERU/acre • \$4.60 mo.
Governmental
8.1 ERU/acre • \$16.20 mo. ■

Annise Parker is serving her third term in Houston City Council At-large Position 1 and is a candidate for city controller. To receive her bi-monthly e-mail newsletter, contact annise.parker@cityofhouston.net or call 713/247-2014. Her website is www.ci.houston.tx.us/citygov/council/1.



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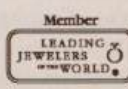
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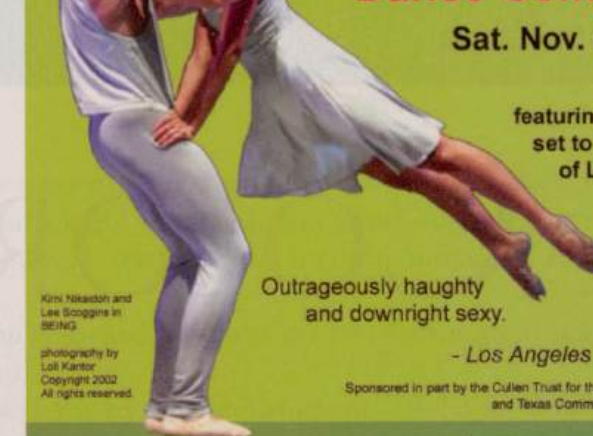
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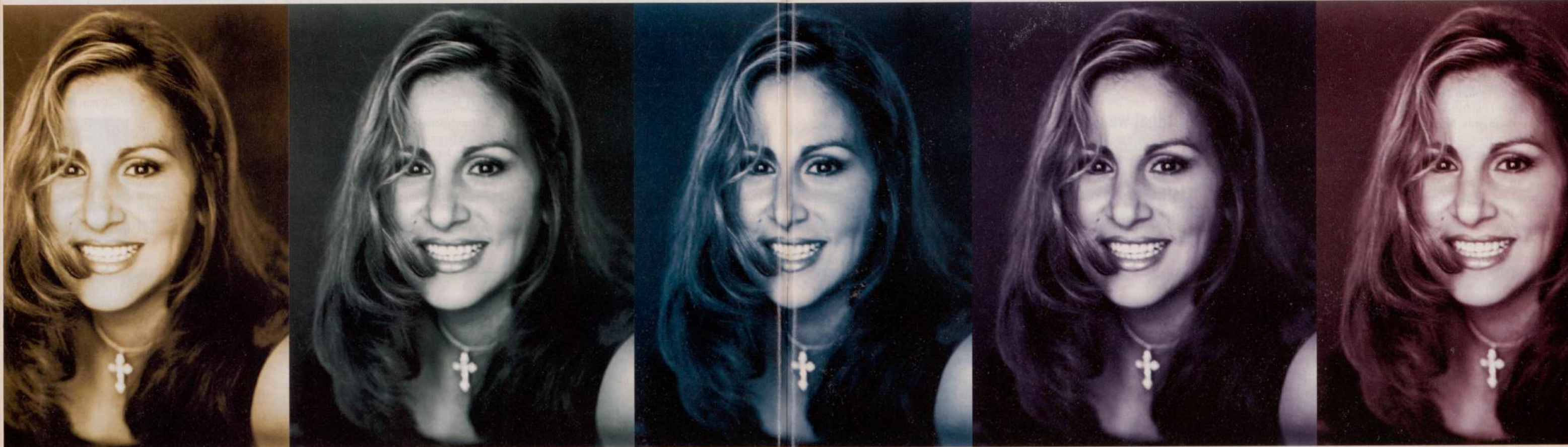
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KATHY NAJIMY



A COLORFUL LIFE

Bi all means

Actress, activist, funny lady Kathy Najimy gives an exclusive interview to *OutSmart* on the eve of her Houston appearance for the Black Tie Dinner

by Blase DiStefano

Maybe you've seen her as Kirstie Alley's associate on the sitcom *Veronica's Closet*. In movies, she was Sister Mary Patrick, the great giggly nun with the great voice in *Sister Act*, for which she won an American Comedy Award. (Other films include *Soapdish*, *Hocus Pocus*, *The Fisher King*, and *Hope Floats*.)

For those of you who don't recognize her, maybe you've heard her voice on Fox's animated series *King of the Hill*—she's Peggy Hill, the “queen” of the Hill family.

However, before all of these incarnations, Najimy was Kathy in *The Kathy and Mo Show*, a hilarious off-Broadway and HBO sketch revue, which won an Obie Award for the stage show and two Cable Ace Awards for the special.

I would be remiss if I didn't mention her “gay” repertoire: Sharon Stone's gynecologist in HBO's *If These Walls Could Talk 2*, written and directed by Anne Heche; a cameo appearance in the film *Jeffrey*; her voiced character in HBO's animated *The Sissy Duckling*, written by Harvey Fierstein; and her featured role in three episodes of *Ellen* (and while we're on the subject, Ellen DeGeneres is godmother to her daughter). →

Najimy has been involved for many years in AIDS activism (she has been honored with the L.A. Shanti's Founder Award and the L.A. Gay & Lesbian Center's Distinguished Achievement Award).

Najimy will be here for the Houston Black Tie Dinner on November 15. The event (www.houstonblacktiedinner.org) benefits PFLAG/H.A.T.C.H. Youth Scholarship Fund, Bering Omega Community Services, AssistHers, An Uncommon Legacy Foundation, Montrose Counseling Center, and People With AIDS Coalition.

I talked to Najimy by phone while she was in the midst of planning a party for her mother and contending with kitchen remodelers. Though the interview was scheduled for 15 minutes, she graciously gave her undivided attention for almost 45 minutes.

Blase DiStefano: Hi, Kathy.

Kathy Najimy: Hi, how are you?

OK. How are you doing?

Good. Sorry about that time mix-up. I had a bunch of kitchen remodeling people over, and it got away from me.

No problem. So tell me about being lesbian... I mean Lebanese.

[Laughs] I'm full-blooded Lebanese—my mom was born in Beirut. My father was also Lebanese—his parents were born in Lebanon—and my daughter's name is Samia, which is an Arabic name. I am heavily involved in the Arabic movement, and I've received awards and made speeches.

In fact, I'm about to throw a 75th birthday party for my mother. We're doing it in a big Arabic supper club, and then the next day we're having a party for her at my house by the pool with an Arabic band. And Lebanese food is the best. My mom is the best cook, period, but the best Lebanese-food cook in the world. And it's the food I grew up on. My husband hardly eats anything—he eats like four different things in all—but he'll eat anything my mom touches.

What are some Lebanese foods?

Tabouli, rolled grape leaves, baba ghanoush, falafel—that's all Lebanese food.

And the dancing is really beautiful, and the women are the most beautiful women in the world. I was taught from when I was little, but it's a point of pride, and so I try to instill that in my daughter who's half Irish and half Lebanese.

We wrote this pilot that we were sure was going to be too controversial, and of course it was. I played a performance artist living in a loft in New York with my HIV-positive drag queen brother.

Weren't you Lebanese on *Veronica's Closet*?

Yeah, when I accepted the offer to do *Veronica's Closet*, one of the producers had the idea, which I thought was so cool, that Olive, my character, could be Lebanese. So we really worked that in... not a lot, but anytime that Kirstie's character came over to my house, I would have like hummus and Arabic bread. My last name was Massery,

which is my mom's maiden last name. There aren't many Lebanese characters on TV.

Are there any?

Well, there was Danny Thomas, and then Jamie Farr was in *M*A*S*H*—I think he played Lebanese. I don't remember. Historically, there haven't been a lot of Lebanese characters on TV shows.

It's been educational, thank you. OK, now let's talk about *Vagina Monologues*.

Actually, I'm one of the founding members of VDAY [a global movement inspired by the *Vagina Monologues* to stop violence against women and girls]. My friend is Eve Ensler, the woman who created *Vagina Monologues*.

Probably about seven years ago, I had a deal with NBC for my own television show, to develop it. But I didn't really want to have my own television show, and Eve really didn't want to write for television, so we were perfectly matched. We wrote this pilot that we were sure was going to be too controversial, and of course it was. I played a performance artist living in a loft in New York with my HIV-positive drag queen brother.

continued on page 28

Houston Gay Couple Welcomes Twins to the Family!

ON MAY 15TH, 2003, FRANK AND BOB'S life changed forever as they welcomed their children, Lucas and Leah, to their family.

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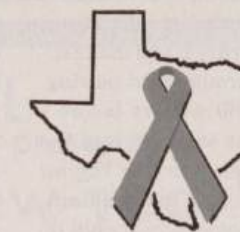
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In the 1995 film *Jeffrey*, Kathy Najimy (r) played an acolyte seeking the help of a New Age evangelist (Sigourney Weaver).



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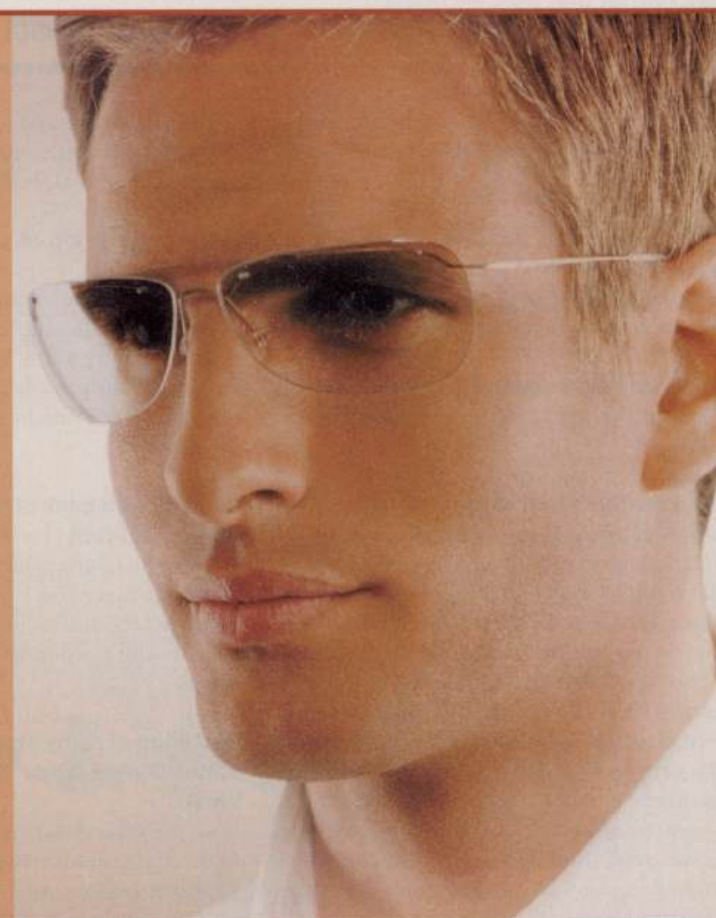
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[Laughs] I'm sure that went over really well.

Yeah. I put a little Post-it on the outside of it: "Here's our script. I think it's really funny, but I think you're really crazy if you make it."

Anyway, I met Eve through that pairing. I had met with maybe 80 writers before I chose Eve. Everyone sent samples, and the sample they sent for her was the *Vagina Monologues*. I thought it was just brilliant. I actually said to her, "Somebody should do this. I'll do it out on the street, or you should do it in a theater." She started doing it, and we had the very first fundraiser here in my living room. With the money we raised, Eve put together the very first VDAY, which was in New York on Broadway. Then we did it here in L.A., and then we did Madison Square Garden where we raised \$4 million in one night, and that was awesome—with Oprah, Jane Fonda, Glenn Close, and Queen Latifah. That was an amazing night.

But the *Vagina Monologues* are done right now not only in the United States, but all over the world. And VDAYs are done now all over the world.

Eve is one of those people who by the virtue of her being has literally changed the world. Other than the fact that she's my friend, I think she's the most important person to emerge for freedom, people's rights, in the last 15 years. She's been so important with the whole vagina movement *[laughs]*. I'm really proud to know her.

You said that was about seven years ago when it all started?

Yeah, because I was with my husband then, and we've been together for eight years.

Oh, when is your anniversary?

Our anniversary is in August. Samia is six years old.

On to the other end of the spectrum—what do you think of Bush as a president?

Well, I think it's the most frightening thing that could be happening right now—to have a president who is so narrow-minded with a worldview an inch wide. He has no sense of the world and respect for the world and culture and who really is responsible for what. I think what he is, is a cheerleader who gets people riled up to hate, and in this mass hate he could be the leader of this hate cheerleading team. I'm the most patriotic person you'll find. However, I don't believe in bombing anywhere, let alone countries you know.

And then the fact that he would say what he said about gay people, that "I'm a sinner, too." The f--ker. *Who wants you on our side? Don't even equate yourself with gay people. We don't even want you to say you have anything in common with gay people.* First of all, gay people aren't sinners. They're better people than you'll ever be in your whole entire life, and don't bring us down to your level. I say that because I feel like I'm part of the community.

So I think it's dangerous. I have a six-year-old daughter. I'm frightened about what's going to happen with choice. I'm frightened with what's going to happen with gay and lesbian rights. On the whole, I'm frightened about the tone of the country towards the rest of the world and the self-superiority and the ignorance that comes in the huge decisions that literally take lives. So on a very big level, I'm afraid, and on a smaller level, I'm angry.

He's got some agendas that have nothing

On Bush: The fact that he would say what he said about gay people, that "I'm a sinner, too." Don't even equate yourself with gay people. We don't even want you to say you have anything in common with gay people.

to do with peace and love and security and prosperity. His agendas are a little bit more . . . not emotional, but visceral, I think.

Who's on the top of your list for our next president?

Right now I'm campaigning with Howard Dean, and I'm hoping that Wesley Clark will be his running mate. My first choice would be Hillary for president, but vice president would be OK. I find her very smart and very effective.

What did you think of her health-care idea?

I thought it could have been better thought out, but I thought that her purpose was in the right place. So I thought that she was seeing as the end result exactly what should be, but she needed to work on how to get there.

Speaking of "dirty blondes," tell me a little about *Dirty Blonde* [Najimy played Mae West].

It's a play that I did on Broadway two years ago. It's a really well-written play by Claudia Shear, and directed by James Lapine, who's one of the premier directors

of Broadway. To get offered the part was just a dream come true for me. I took my whole family to New York.

Then Jack O'Brien called me. He recently won the Tony for *Hairspray* and runs the Old Grove Theater, which is a gorgeous theater in San Diego, where I grew up. He called and said, "Let's do *Dirty Blonde* at the Old Grove," and I said I would do it in the summer when the kids were off from school. And it just turned out to be—and I don't say this about all projects; in fact I'm known to complain sometimes—one of those almost spiritual experiences. Everything was so beautiful, sold out every night, great reviews, beautiful crew and company, standing ovations. Just everything. Being home and all the people coming out of the woodwork from my childhood, both good and annoying *[laughs]*. So it was a great experience. I hope to do the play again. I just don't know when.

I don't suppose it was videotaped.
No.

What a bummer. What about people like us who want to see it?
Yeah, well, you never know, it might come to Houston.

But with you, though.
I would like that.

That would be very nice. So what are you doing now, besides the kitchen and planning your mom's 75th birthday party?

[Laughs] I am on a show called *King of the Hill*. It's a Fox show, sort of like *The Simpsons*.

Yes, I keep forgetting that's you, which is good, I guess, that I don't . . .
That you don't know it's me?

That I don't think of the person who is actually voicing it, which is a compliment.
Oh, thank you. And it just got picked up for its ninth season.

About how long does it take out of your week?

It's a day and a half a week. So it's great, because I can do my political stuff. Oh, I have another job . . . well, you know, this is what I do—I'm coming to Houston. This is my other job—I speak around the country about things I care about, and then I have *King of the Hill*, and then I have a six-year-old, so *King of the Hill* allows me to do both my family stuff and my political stuff.

continued on page 30

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And of course movies, too. I do. I try not to.

What happens when you do a movie, do you...

I don't do so much anymore, but I usually just do it at a time when Samia's out of school and she can come. But it really has to be something really different at this point of my life.

How often do you do your speaking engagements?

I would say I go out about six or seven times a year, so every other month I go. Sometimes it gets a little more than that. Like last year right around the end of the year, I was doing like September, October, November, December—one a month, sometimes two a month. But I haven't done one in a while. I couldn't because I was in

San Diego doing the play all summer. And so Houston will be the first one since I've been back.

Good for us.

I believe that everybody is born with the capacity to love anybody. Now whichever life events take us in different ways, that's how our preferences are born.

I really like it. I feel most in my skin when I am speaking, much more than acting.

Really?

Yes, because every syllable I believe in. Like somebody else's movie I might not be so excited about what I'm talking about. I feel the connection with the audience, because clearly they're all there because they are like-minded [laughs].

I recently did a thousand people in Chicago for choice, on the anniversary of *Roe vs. Wade*, and then I went to Fresno and I talked to 5,000 working women about working women, and now I'm going to Houston and talking about gay and lesbian rights. I do a lot of AIDS speaking, which I like. When I'm doing it, I don't feel like... you know, sometimes you do a job and you feel like, *OK, I'm just doing this for money, I'm doing this because that's who they think I am, or it was too hard to pass by this opportunity*. But my speaking I literally do because I just feel honored to do it. And I feel like *Oh, this is why I was born* [laughs].

That must be a really good feeling.

Yeah, it really is, I really love it. I always sort of hate it the week before when I have to write the speech, and the traveling, and I'm just up there and the people are out there. I gotta tell you, people call you, *Are you nervous tonight?* There's a little bit of

a buzz, but not really, because I really believe in every single word I say. And how often in life does that happen [laughs]?

Isn't that the truth? Didn't you present an award to Ellen?

Oh yeah, I gave her an award from the Gay and Lesbian Center and also from Women's Night. I give an award to Ellen, she gives me an award... there's a little group of us, me and Ellen and Melissa Etheridge—a very dear, dear, dear friend—and we have a joke, *Who is it this month?* [Both laugh]

Your speeches are so beautiful, the few that I've read.

Oh, on my website?

Yes.

Oh great, thank you so much.

And very well thought out. I understand what you're saying when you say it's you speaking, because I could really feel it. I like your great sense of humor. You just seem like such a kind person.

Thank you. I try. There are those who would say *nay* [laughs]. But I try not so much to be nice, because I find that to be an empty fake thing. But I try to be just. Good and just are my talents and what I really try to be, because I feel that's a much more fulfilling payback. Good is a talent, isn't it?

Yes, definitely. Can we talk just a second about the fact that you're married but not straight?

I believe—and as naïve and sort-of 1972 as it is [laughs]—I believe that everybody is born with the capacity to love anybody. Now whichever life events take us in different ways, that's how our preferences are born. I think our preferences are shaped by good events and bad events—bad things that happen to us and good things that happen to us. Also the climate of society at the particular time when we grow up, because your growing up would be different than say a man who grew up in the '40s, with the same desires or preferences. I think all of those things—plus biology—come into play. But I think ultimately, organically, we all have the ability to love anybody.

Now I respect preferences. Like I believe it when somebody says to me, "I only want to kiss men ever, ever, ever." "I'm only ever attracted to blond-haired women ever, ever, ever." I'm not questioning that. All I'm saying is that I feel that there is the ability to love. And I feel like that is true in my life. It just so happens that my soulmate and

continued on page 74

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High time: Renowned countertenor David Daniels makes his Houston Grand Opera debut in Handel's *Caesar*.

Two openly gay opera talents star in *Julius Caesar* SING HIGH, SING LOW,

Houston Grand Opera has opened its season with impressive royal fireworks: George Frederick Handel's baroque masterpiece, *Julius Caesar*. In a new production (through November 16), this 1724 sparkler stars one of the opera world's most sought-after, brightest singers, countertenor deluxe David Daniels as Caesar, as well as up-and-coming HGO Studio alumnus Joshua Winograde, who booms forth as General Achillas.

Daniels, the world's reigning countertenor, blazes at the peak of his career, while Winograde, fresh out of HGO's apprenticeship, is just beginning his. Both are openly gay and equally forthcoming.

"Opera, as are all performing arts, tends to be a very accepting and nonjudgmental field," Winograde said in a recent phone interview. "I don't really know why that is, but it must have something to do with choice. For people to have chosen to spend their lives in performing arts, it kind of means they're already an open-minded person, they're already tolerant and interested in things of an abstract and artistic nature. I know a huge amount of successful working gay singers. It's nowhere near half, but it's probably more than in banking. It's a very open community. Brady's always around and involved."

Brady is Bradon McDonald, Winograde's partner of nine years and a dancer with the

Mark Morris Dance Group. The two met as students at the Juilliard School.

"Although I'm not sure because I have no affiliation with Wall Street at all, but if I were a Wall Street banker, I would imagine that Brady might be somewhat more of a stranger to my professional life. But in opera, he's involved completely as I am in his as a dancer."

For people to have chosen to spend their lives in performing arts, it kind of means they're already an open-minded person, they're already tolerant and interested in things of an abstract and artistic nature.

Although Daniels realized his sexual orientation in high school, it wasn't until college that he talked openly about it to others. Public acknowledgment happened by accident.

"The New Yorker was doing a piece on me in 1997," Daniels recalled by phone. "The guy followed me around to two or three different engagements, came to my home. It was really an in-depth interview. He wanted to talk about my private life, the first time anybody had asked me about that. I kind of freaked a little bit. But then I thought, I had been with John 11 years, and I wasn't going to pretend that that's not an important part of my life."

Daniel's partner, John Touchton, is music director at Christ Congregational Church in

Silver Springs, Maryland, as well as choral director at the prestigious Sidwell Friends School in Washington, D.C. (and a San Antonio native).

"We work too hard and long, and had too good a time and too much suffering to pretend it doesn't exist. That's when I started to make a real effort to be open. Because I'm a classical artist, I'm limited in the audience

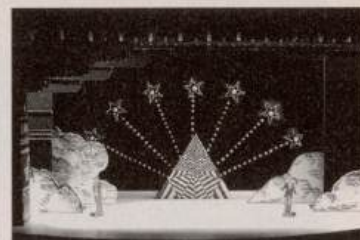
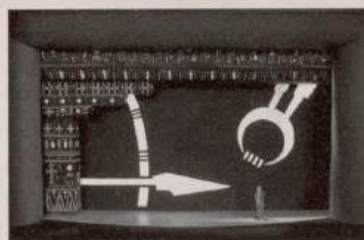
I can reach, but I have some sort of stature that I can hopefully be a role model in some ways. Not so much a role model, but maybe an example."

Daniels continued: "I have a little story I want to share with

you. A young boy in South Carolina was in a performing-arts high school where a friend of mine was his professor. I found out this boy had tried to commit suicide twice and that it was about being gay. He came from a very fundamentalist background. I did a recital in Atlanta, which was one of my first times getting down into the South singing, and my friend brought all his students there to see me perform. He had also brought all the magazines to the school about me talking about being gay. The boy told his teacher that to see me perform in Atlanta was so inspirational—to see somebody successful, open, honest, and happy who was homosexual. He said it really helped him get through it all. He's in college now and very much into the young gay movement. I

SING OUT

by D.L. Groover



thought, Wow, if that's not a reason to be open and honest and real about this, there's not any. It made a huge impression on me."

Daniels, who is making his Houston debut in *Julius Caesar*, does indeed have the stature. He is one out of a handful of singers who has revived an entire repertoire of neglected masterworks from baroque opera. These roles were originally performed by those most bizarre, sad, but wildly successful vocalists ever—the castrati,

rival those of any contemporary rock star. It's a rich repertoire to be mined: Albinoni, Scarlatti, Hasse, Orlandini, Giacomelli, Graun, and Handel, above all.

"I'm looking forward to this production," said a happy Daniels. "It's gonna be fun."



Low man: Bass Joshua Winograde, a Houston Opera Studio alumnus, is the other openly gay singer in *Caesar*.

I had been with John 11 years, and I wasn't going to pretend that that's not an important part of my life.

emasculated boy sopranos who would, after their illegal operation, retain a high, angelic sound throughout their entire career, their stratospheric vocal ornamentations and amazing breath control propelled by manly lungs within barrel chests.

Out of thousands of poor children whose parents saw unlimited fame for their offspring and forced the operation upon them, the lucky few to make a career in the early 1700s were the pop celebrities of the age. Some were gay, but most were not. A few retired with dukedoms, villas, or knight-hoods, after scandalous affairs that would

It'll be my sixth *Caesar*, actually, and being a brand-new production with James Robinson, it just adds excitement. It's a great opera, one of many he wrote. It just happens to be his most popular and familiar. Unfortunately, like most Americans and operagoers, I knew *The Messiah*, and only

the Christmas portion and the 'Hallelujah Chorus,' and not much more. Not until I became a countertenor did I start to find all these unbelievable masterpieces."

In September, Winograde made his New York City Opera debut in another Handel work, *Alcina*. "For people who think *Julius Caesar* was written a few hundred too many years ago for them to care, or that it's antiquated, or aren't expecting a major emotional soap opera, they're wrong. All the heightened drama that has really become associated with later opera like Verdi and Puccini exists in Handel."

"Many of his operas are accessible," Daniels said. "You look at *Partenope* that we did in Chicago last June. Who in the world has heard of that? But it was a huge hit. We sold out 10 performances. It's a great, great drama. It's what Handel is so amazing at doing—the drama. A drama that can be put into modern times and still be as powerful as it was then."

As Daniels prefers, the HGO production is updated.

"I feel constricted in tons of costume, wigs, makeup, and laurel wreaths. I can bring more human quality to the character, and it's a little easier for me to relate to. When James [Robinson] asked me if there was anything I really wanted to stay away from, I said, Two things: Don't dress me in white and don't give me armor."

"I'm entering the stage in a tank!"

*D.L. Groover, chief arts contributor for this magazine, is author of *Skeletons from the Opera Closet* (Moyer Bell Ltd.).*

Hail Caesar: James Schuette designed the costumes (right) for the new production (performed through November 16), created by James Robinson. Christine Jones designed the sets (above).



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Wide Open Space

Lofty ambitions distinguish a Museum District condo

by Troy Broussard • Photographs by Bob Jackson



In their loft home, Ed McIntosh and David Hollingsworth created a flexible, changeable space. Wood-plank floors define the living and dining areas and the kitchen. Note the mix of traditional and contemporary furniture. The glass door leads to a spacious patio. →

In the dining area, the massive, elaborately carved mirror provides a view for diners facing the wall. The mirror also reflects light from the bronze rococo chandeliers suspended over the table and the candles. Wall colors—a soft acorn yellow here—change subtly throughout the loft.

Our collective Southern traditions taught us the rules. There is a dining room for dining furniture, a bedroom for bedroom furniture, and a living room for the sofa and television. Even the most modest Montrose bungalow has rigidly divided space, dictating furniture arrangements. But that changed about five years ago in Houston with the insurgence of loft properties in Montrose, Midtown, Uptown, and downtown. Spatial interpretations are now only limited by the imagination of the owner. Loft living is not about inflexible dissection of space, but rather uninhibited open

areas. And the best lofts that I have seen in Houston are malleable spaces that evolve with time.

Ed McIntosh (of Jacques Antiques) and David Hollingsworth's interpretation of their Museum District loft is an inspiration. Tackling the interior design themselves, they approached the large open spaces as an ever-changing stage set. Guests have witnessed this backdrop transform at a moment's notice from a formal seated dinner with crystal, sterling silver, and Dom Perignon to a "white trash" weenie roast with an inflatable pool, spare tires, and Twinkie cake.

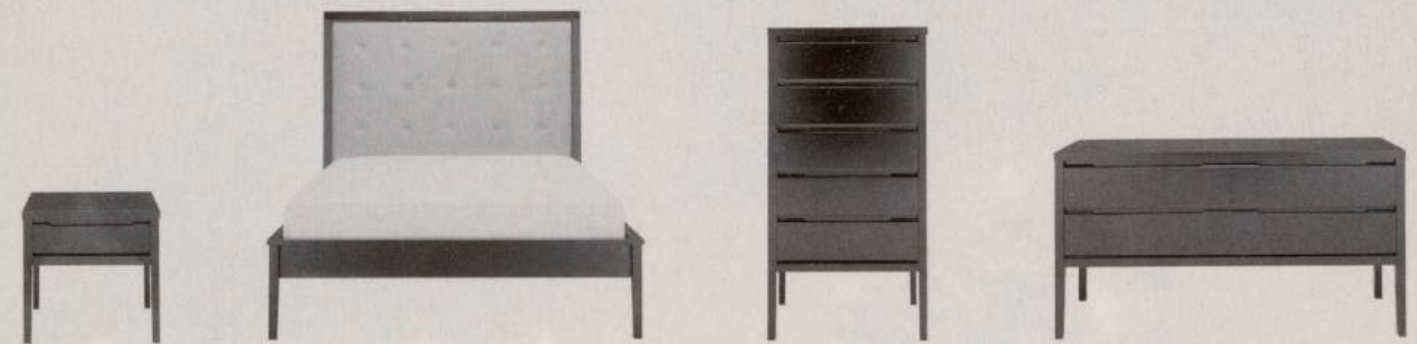
In Houston, loft dwelling differs from that in other cities where lofts have been popular for decades. The



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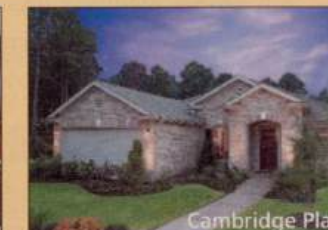
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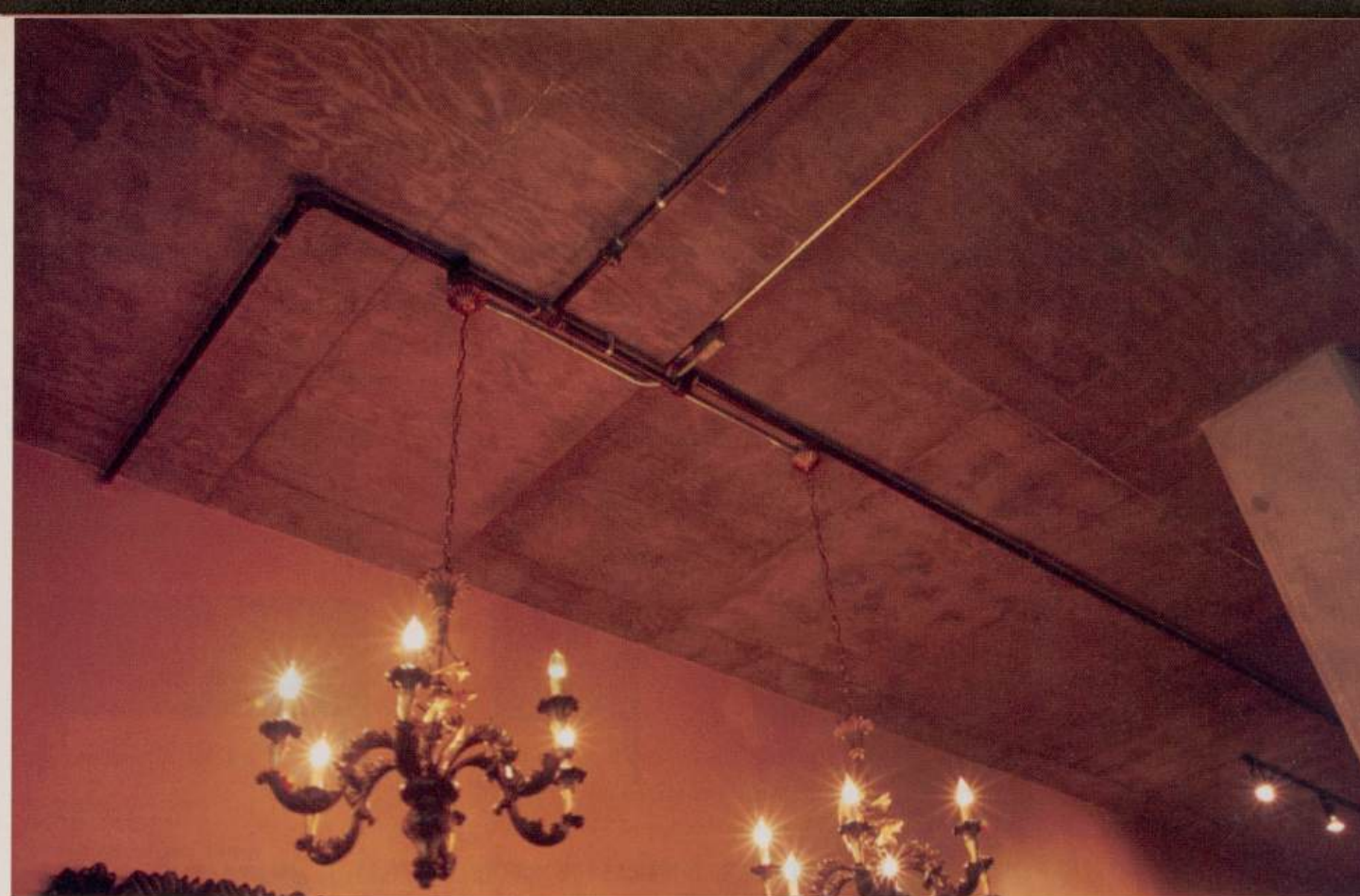
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Plain electrical conduit affixed to the ceiling powers the elaborate chandeliers and creates a sculptural, Mondrian-like design. Such an industrial design feature would not work in a more traditional residence but fits into a loft space like this one.

luxury condominium building where McIntosh and Hollingsworth reside was created as a loft development, rather than born as a conversion from an old building. Concrete floors and ceilings, aluminum-cased windows, and exposed HVAC (air conditioning vents) add industrial chic character to the building.

One of the ways that McIntosh chose to delineate space was to change flooring materials from area to area. Wood-plank floor encompasses the living area, dining area, and kitchen like an enormous rug. The floor in the foyer, hallways, and bedrooms remains concrete.

In the area designated for dining furniture, McIntosh and Hollingsworth use a long, heavy wooden table that transforms into a buffet during a cocktail party. Upholstered oval-back chairs surround the table. The table and chairs are not antiques, but rather streamlined interpretations in the

manner of classic European shapes.

Loft living is not always about sleek and modular furniture. One should never shy away from antiques in a loft. The incorporation of antiques and reproductions in the context of such a new environment imbues a sense of heritage and stability, characteristics essential in a city in search of its own place in history.

For an added touch of grandeur, McIntosh and Hollingsworth installed a pair of bronze rococo chandeliers over the dining table. The ornate styling and curvilinear shape of the fixtures establish unexpected juxtaposition with the home's stark contemporary architectural detailing.

Especially worthy of mention is the use of plain electrical conduit affixed across the ceiling to power the chandeliers. Successful loft inhabitants need not be limited to power sources dictated by a builder. It is a gutsy and unassuming design decision that would never work in a traditional residence. →



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Get that look

You can find furnishings and accessories that can help you create the polished yet relaxed look of Ed McIntosh and David Hollingworth's loft.

Photos by Troy Broussard

1. You'll never dine alone with this enigmatic bust of a wood sprite. A 19th-century French piece, he comes complete with an inventory number (perhaps from a museum or important private collection) and is available at Carl Moore Antiques.



2. Liberace would have been green with envy over this pair of Continental candelabrum. Made in Europe in the mid-19th century, these gilded bronze items—like jewelry for the table—are available at David Lackey Antiques.



3. Assembled from hundreds of gnarled tree roots, this is a most unusual mirror. Available at Prince-Lackey Antiques, the massive frame was made in England in 1890, but the glass is probably new.



4. This late-19th-century Tennessee farm table could go casual with painted country French chairs or sophisticated with mahogany Chippendale chairs. This piece, with dark wood-plank top and original white painted frame, is available at the Antique Pavillion.



5. An assortment of early 20th-century chairs, like these "Ox Bow" models, can be found hanging in a row at Jacques Antiques. Upholstered with a tapestry, they would convey an old-world look, but in a geometric contemporary fabric, they would impart an unexpected contrast in a loft environment.



RESOURCES

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Wide Open Space continued from page 40

In combination with the exposed pipes of the sprinkler system, the conduit creates that fashionable industrial chic look that bestows authenticity on the new loft space. In fact, the Mondrian-like shapes formed by the web of pipe and conduit are almost sculptural.

Even the most decoratively adept homeowner needs professional input from time to time. On the advice of designer and event planner Steven Wagner, a cool mossy green meets a warm acorn yellow, unifying the cold concrete with the rich flooring. The color change is elegantly playful. This is a clever yet subtle device that, if done properly, could transform any loft.

And as a final touch of whimsy, an elaborately carved mirror in a dark finish balances perfectly against the simple shape and blonde finish of the dining table. Hanging horizontally, the mirror provides a view for diners who are seated facing the wall. The mirror also reflects the candelabras and chandeliers from every perspective in the loft, adding valuable light and creating an increased sense of drama.

The days of selecting a matching suite of dining furniture is over, especially for those urban pioneers who inhabit lofts. So if your dining room is a turkey, use the approaching holiday season as incentive to creatively attack empty spaces or to upgrade existing furniture selections. On the following page are some suggestions from local shops, based on McIntosh and Hollingsworth's dining area, to inspire a stylish transformation in your own home. After all, I think that the nicest thing anyone can do for himself or herself is to have an appealing and comfortable interior.

Beginning with this issue, Troy Broussard will cover home design for the magazine. The OutSmart readers named Broussard, who participated in our Big Switch decorating project (November 2002), best interior designer in the most recent Gayest & Greatest survey ("So Gay, So Great," October 2003).

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Varla Jean on Screen

A Houston-born drag performer
stars in the indy hit *Girls Will Be Girls*

By Bradley David Williams



Photographed in soft
focus, à la Doris Day,
Varla Jean is ready for
her closeup.

Drag superstar Varla Jean Merman (a.k.a. Jeffrey Roberson) has finally made it to the big screen, starring in

the twisted new movie *Girls Will Be Girls*. The gender-bending flick, which at press time was set to open November 7 at the Landmark Greenway 3 Theatre, features

Roberson as Varla, a country girl with a bit of an eating disorder and a relentless drive to make it big as an actress. Varla is part of a three-drag-queen ensemble that

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Varla Jean

continued from previous page

includes Jack Plotnick as Evie, an aging lush in the "twi-dark" of her acting career, and Evie's roommate and verbal punching bag Coco (Clinton Leupp), whose only goal in life is to have a child with the doctor who performed her abortion. The over-the-top film was a huge hit at this year's Sundance Film Festival, and it won Roberson best-actor kudos at the Aspen HBO Film Festival and at the 2003 Outfest Film Festival.

If you haven't caught one of Varla Jean's rollicking (and always sold out) performances in Provincetown, New York, or points beyond, you may have seen Roberson's network TV debut in February on *All My Children* in the recurring role of lady of the evening Rosemary Chicken. Other acting credits include HBO's *Dragtime*, E!'s *Fashion Emergency*, E!'s *Goes to Cannes*, MTV's *True Life: Mardi Gras*, and the role of Mary Sunshine in the first national touring company of the Broadway revival of *Chicago*.

Roberson was born in Hermann Hospital in Houston some 33 years ago. The son of an FBI agent who was constantly transferred to different jobs, he spent much of his childhood in various towns throughout Louisiana and got a degree in advertising from Louisiana State University. He recently moved back to New Orleans and bought a house in the Marigny Faubourg district, from which he recently spoke by phone about *Girls Will Be Girls*.

Bradley Williams: Congratulations on the movie.

Jeffrey Roberson: I laugh about it—this is not the first movie I've done, but it's the first movie I've done that is actually going to be released. I've worked on a couple of other projects that were, I guess, ill-fated. This is the first time somebody has actually written something for me that fits.



Varla Jean (Jeffrey Roberson, l) confronts Evie (Jack Plotnick) in *Girls Will Be Girls*.

How did the movie come about?

I knew this guy in New York, Miss Coco (Clinton Leupp), who is in the movie *Trick*. He came to my show in L.A., and my piano player at the time, Seth Rudetsky, brought his best friend from school—Jack Plotnick, who plays Evie Harris in the film. So Seth brought Jack, and Jack brought his good friend Richard Day, who writes for television—he's written for *Ellen* and the *Larry Sanders Show*. That's when Richard got the idea of writing a

It seems like whenever somebody was having a party when I was growing up, before long, after a few drinks, someone would pull out the box of wigs and the Goodwill pantsuits.

movie with our characters living together in, you know, a Hollywood food-chain movie.

How did you get started in drag?

I started doing drag just in New Orleans because, you know, in New Orleans there's not this big stigma attached to drag like you see in these other places. It seems like whenever somebody was having a party when I was growing up, before long, after a few drinks, someone would pull out the box of wigs and the Goodwill pantsuits...

Does being a drag queen ever interfere with your dating life?

Oh, god, yes! People look at it like you're some crazy freak. I usually don't even tell people. No one ever recognizes me. I mean, I definitely consider it acting at this point. When I started out, it was just to be crazy. I started out going out in New Orleans. I'd go out with a giant can of refried beans and dance drunk on the bar. I don't know what it is, but a lot of guys are really put off by it. Even this guy I'm dating now, when he found out, he was really freaked out. It's just a difficult thing to balance, but once they see I'm nothing like that person on stage—or at least I hide it from them [laughs]—they're OK with it.

What's this I hear about Elton John being a big Varla Jean fan?

Yeah, he first came to my show in L.A. several years ago. They said after the show, "Somebody wants to meet you," and I thought, *Who is this?* I went outside and it's Elton John standing there, but it looked like it was a wax figure. I mean, it was so surreal. Then he invited me to do some benefits for his AIDS foundation in London. He's very nice.

Bradley David Williams interviewed actor Todd Waite for the October issue.

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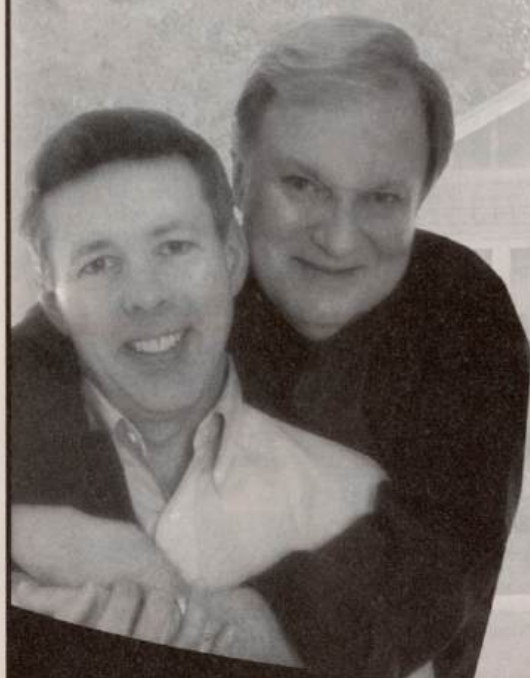
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Bette Midler
*Bette Midler Sings
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There was *The Divine Miss M* in 1972, followed by *Bette Midler* in 1973. The original piano accompanist, musical director, and producer of those two breakthrough albums—openly gay Barry Manilow—reunites with *The Divine One* on *Bette Midler Sings the Rosemary Clooney Songbook*, which pays homage to George Clooney's mom.

"I have loved Rosemary Clooney for as long as I can remember," writes Midler in her notes for the album. "She possessed one of the great American voices of the last century, full of warmth, sincerity, and truth. Her intonation was impeccable, she never sang a false note... she radiated intelligence and good humor, and boy, could she swing!" That coming from today's swing queen.

Midler has chosen 11 of Clooney's songs from the '50s, to which she brings her vibrant voice twinged with just enough humor to



make this Bette's best yet. Maybe you have to like these "old-timey" songs to appreciate Midler's versions, but you can't deny that her voice now has a mature quality that lends itself to such songs as "You'll Never Know," "Tenderly," and "In the Cool, Cool, Cool of the Evening."

But don't fret—Midler doesn't forgo fun. Her "Mambo Italiano" and "Come On-A My House" will make you want to dance, and her duets—with Manilow on "On a Slow Boat to China" and with Linda Ronstadt on "Sisters"—are rollicking jollity.

The Divine Diva concludes her *Clooney Songbook* with a beautiful rendition of "White Christmas," just in time for holiday listening.

From Columbia Records (www.columbiarecords.com).

FYI: Midler's upcoming tour, *Kiss My Brass*, is scheduled to begin in December (no word at press time on a Houston appearance), and 2004 will bring Midler to the big screen in a remake of *The Stepford Wives*, co-starring Nicole Kidman, Glenn Close, and Matthew Broderick. Shiver me timbers! —Blase DiStefano

Barbra Streisand
The Movie Album

Babs' 60th album features 12 brand-new recordings, all personal selections of the artist's favorite songs from films spanning the years 1935–1988. *The Movie Album* also includes revealing song-by-song annotations by Streisand, who dedicates the album "to my friend Gregory Peck, a screen legend, who in real life possessed all the humanity and dignity he brought to his career-defining roles." A few of the songs include "Moon River" (*Breakfast at Tiffany's*), "You're Gonna Hear from Me" (*Inside Daisy Clover*), "But Beautiful" (*Road to Rio*), and "The Second Time Around" (*High Time*). A must for any Streisand fan. From Columbia Records (www.columbiarecords.com). —Troy Carrington



Various Artists Sing Dolly Parton
Just Because I'm a Woman: Songs of Dolly Parton

It's the 35th anniversary of Dolly Parton's first RCA solo album *Just Because I'm a Woman*, and what better way to celebrate than with a collection that pays homage to her rich catalog of songs. Melissa Etheridge, who sings "I Will Always Love You," chose the song "because I feel it is one of the most perfect songs ever written." Joan Osborne sings "Do I Ever Cross Your Mind" and Norah Jones covers "The Grass Is Blue." Other performers include Alison Krauss, Shelby Lynne, Emmylou Harris, Shania Twain, and Sinéad O'Connor. Bonus track: a new recording of *Just Because I'm a Woman* by the icon herself. From Sugar Hill Records (www.sugarhillrecords.com). —Suzie Lynde



Mariah Carey
Mariah Carey: The Remixes

Our mama Mariah has come back blistering out of the atmosphere with nearly two dozen remixes for you club-dwelling boys and girls. She did it the right way, too, as some of the tracks are nearly unrecognizable from the originals, with the arrangements, speed, and even the melodies changed up and mixed around on nearly all of the 22 tracks spread out across these two discs. The standout would have to be "I Know What You Want," featuring Busta Rhymes and Flipmode Squad. It's one of the slower jams and probably unlikely to make it to the turntables during the hotter parts of your Saturday nights on the dance floor, but it does reinforce the peanut butter and chocolate theory of her voice going



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up against a rough one making for a lovely combo. From Columbia (www.columbiarecords.com). —Lance Walker

Donna Summer

The Journey: The Very Best of Donna Summer

One of dance music's greatest divas, Donna Summer, and one of its greatest producers, Giorgio Moroder, have reunited for the first time in 22 years with two new recordings—bonuses on this two-CD set. "That's the Way" and "Dream-a-Lot's Theme (I Will Live for Love)" are the pair's first collaborations since 1981's *I'm a Rainbow*. The other 18 tracks, each digitally remastered, include all 14 of her Top 10 hits. A bonus disc features extended 12" mixes of "I Feel Love," "Hot Stuff," "She Works Hard for the Money," and "This Time I Know It's for Real." From UTV/Mercury/UMe. —TC



Christine Martucci

Mama Says

Powerful and passionate, smart and sexy, openly lesbian Christine Martucci shows she's ready to rock you like a hurricane on her debut CD, *Mama Says*. Martucci's muscular vocal style—backed by the guitar-driven, blues rock of her band—has earned her favorable comparisons to Tina Turner and Janis Joplin, but her music will also appeal to fans of classic blues rockers from Eric Clapton to Bonnie Raitt and Melissa Etheridge. From the soulful, driving rocker "Hearts on Fire" to the passionate undercurrent of "Release Me" and the honky-tonk, Stones-inspired rock feel of "Home," Martucci and her band offer a fresh approach to female rock vocalists. For more info: www.christinemartucci.com. —SL



Kim Char Meredith

Give and Take

An album of songs about relationships is nothing new. But an album exploring a myriad of intriguing interpersonal scenarios—between family, friends, lovers, and relationships of a spiritual nature—coming from a perspective of both personal and universal resonance? That's something to pay attention to. Singer/songwriter/guitarist Kim Char Meredith gives you 10 reasons why she's one of Hawaii's most popular artists on her latest CD, *Give and Take*. From the vulnerability of "You Want In" (dealing with the challenge of staying emotionally open after one too many heartaches) to the triumphant anthem "Sunrise to Sunrise" and the gorgeous "Language of My Love," Meredith holds nothing back. *Give and Take* simply begs to be discovered. From Passionate Women Records. For more info: www.kimchar.com. —SL



Astrogin

Astrogin

Although Astrogin has been around for three years, it is only in the last year that the band found its true voice—literally. A debut album released in the summer of 2001 showed promise, and with everything full steam ahead, the original lead singer left to turn her attention to her maternal instincts. The

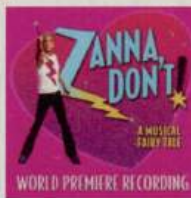


band took a break to regroup. Band founder/lead guitarist Caron Barrett had to sift through the would-bes and wanna-bes to find a voice versatile enough to carry the band's sound. Enter Deborah Vial. The sound gelled almost instantly. Incorporating some of Vial's popular songs into the band's tuneful lineup has given Astrogin yet one more dimension in its already multifaceted musical mix. A recent stint at Chances in Houston proved good for both the bar and the band. From Last Beat Records (www.lastbeatrecords.com). More info: www.astrogin.com. —SL

World Premiere Recording

Zanna, Don't!

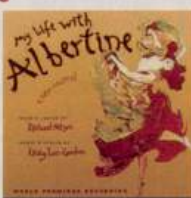
Before he was the "culture" guy in *Queer Eye for the Straight Guy*, Jai Rodriguez was the title character in *Zanna, Don't!*, a bubble-gum pop musical comedy (or as the subtitle reads, "A Musical Fairy Tale"). At Heartsville High, being gay is the norm, and now two characters must struggle with their (gasp!) heterosexuality. When the school musical tackles the issue of straights in the military and the town is set aflame with controversy, can Zanna the magical matchmaker save the day? The show is an ingenious and deliriously funny satire with a big heart, an infectious score, and musical styles ranging from pop to rock to country. From PS Classics (www.psclassics.com). —TC



World Premiere Recording

My Life with Albertine

My Life with Albertine is a lush and fiery portrait of love, jealousy, and betrayal set in turn-of-the-century Paris. Based on the "Albertine" selections of *Remembrance of Things Past* by Marcel Proust, this tale of a man's obsessive affair with a beautiful orphan girl (Albertine) evokes the classical language of Poulenc, Faure, and Satie, the music-hall world of Offenbach, and the dark shadows of the city's cabarets. One of the cabarets features a well-known lesbian singer, who is an acquaintance of Albertine, thus the jealousy. Openly gay Ricky Ian Gordon wrote the music, and he collaborated on the lyrics with Richard Nelson. Gordon's musical work *Only Heaven*, based on the poetry of Langston Hughes (generally thought to be gay), was released in 2002 by PS Classics (www.psclassics.com), who also released *My Life with Albertine*. —TC



Michael Feinstein

Only One Life: The Songs of Jimmy Webb

Openly gay Michael Feinstein has built an illustrious two-decade career interpreting the songs of golden-age luminaries such as George Gershwin, Irving Berlin, and Johnny Mercer. This collaboration with Jimmy Webb marks the most contemporary recording of Feinstein's career. *Only One Life* is a lush and dramatic recording of love, passion, hope, and regret that beautifully combines traditional popular music with a distinctly modern sensibility. The CD includes "Up, Up and Away," performed here as a sensuous bossa nova, "Didn't We," and "Time Flies," which Rosemary Clooney performed during her Emmy Award-nominated guest spot on *ER* (this recording is dedicated to her memory). From Concord Records (www.concordrecords.com). For more info: www.michaelfeinstein.org. —TC



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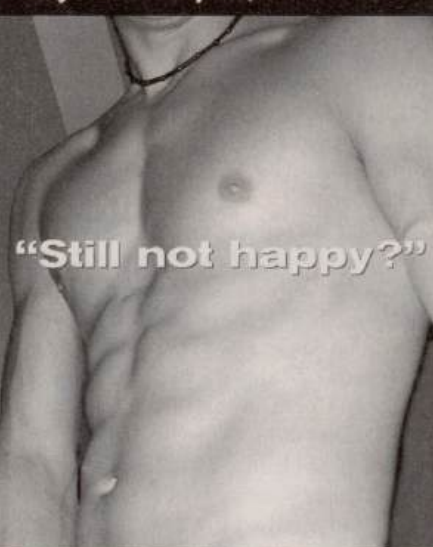
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ORGAN POWER.

In *The Stops*, at Theatre New West (713/522-2204) through December 20, three church ladies tour the provinces on behalf of good Christian heterosexual values in this new musical revue from Eric Lane Barnes, whose *Fruit Cocktail* and *Fairy Tales* have been Bayou City theater high points. When they discover their arranger and mentor is one of the boys, well, their "Bossa Nova for Jehovah" takes on a new spin. **Robert Leeds** (l-r), **Michael Garren**, and **Chris Paul** portray the musical ladies.

—D.L. Groover



JOE WATTS/TNW

GOOD WORKS. On November 7, the improvisational comedy troupe ComedySportz will mark its anniversary with a performance to benefit Gilda's Club, the support resource for people with cancer and their family and friends. The event at Lambert Hall in the Heights will include a silent auction. **Dianah Dulany** founded ComedySportz Houston in 1990.

Gilda's Club is named, of course, for **Gilda Radner**, the late great comic and actress.

From the Nice Work If You Can Get It file: On November 14, photographer **Evin Thayer** will host an evening with the built-and-ready public servants he snapped for the 2004 Houston Fire Fighters Calendar. The event will sizzle at Thayer's studio at 405 Avondale. Proceeds from calendar sales support the firefighter's fund for burned and crippled children.

Just hear those sleigh bells jingling. Music man **Jerry Atwood** and his chums are tuning up for A Christmas Songfest on December 7. Every year his event is one of the first, and most joyful, benefit bashes of the holiday season. The evening at the Edwin Hornberger Conference Center will begin at 5:30 with cocktails and buffet, followed by a concert by a Gay Men's Chorus of Houston contingent, then music from Atwood and other local talents. The highlight is always

the rousing sing-along. "There will be great voices and timid voices and hams up there just to have fun, with the audience often egging them on," Atwood promises. Proceeds benefit The Assistance Fund and Houston Buyer's Club.

On September 19, Sheer Intimates president/owner **Joy Ekhat** hosted a lingerie show at M Bar benefiting AIDS Foundation Houston. Participants included **Leola Anifowoshe**, **Seeta Badel**, **Cherell Bennett**, **Sara Montes**, **Franceska Nicholson**, **Veronika Nicholson**, **Kimberly Webb**, and the **Ndira Nar Dance Company**.

ISLAND LIFE. The avian artwork of **Larry Knapp** will star in a November 8 exhibition and reception at Moody Gardens in Galveston, which will preview the annual FeatherFest celebration on the Island in April. The co-hosting Houston Audubon Society will receive a percentage of sales.

IN YOUR NEIGHBORHOOD. On November 26, **Pansy Division**, the first all-gay rock band, will blow into Fitzgerald's. The guys are touring in support of their new release, *Total Entertainment*.

Barry Mandel is president of the new Houston Downtown Alliance, born when the

Theater District Association and Downtown Houston Association wed in September. Mandel (*OutSmart*, September 2001) had served as executive director of the former group.

The Texas Gay Rodeo Association inducted **Michael Galtz**, former association president and member of the Houston chapter, into the TGRA Hall of Fame in September.

Stellar astrologer and *OutSmart*'s own **Lilly Roddy** performed on guitar with singer/musician **Selia Qynn** at Latte in the Woods, a charming coffee-and-tea spot in Spring Branch, on August 29.

Houston Grand Opera will host Night Out at the Opera on November 11, beginning with a mixer at Meteor with transportation to Wortham Center for a performance of *Julius Caesar* starring hot countertenor **David Daniels** (see profile, page 32).

Our town's **Roy Henrick** and **boy patrick chees** figure in the new book *Woof! Perspectives into the Erotic Care & Training of the Human Dog*. Penned by Michael Daniels, this surprisingly sweet how-to guide (Nazca Plains Corporation) offers detailed advice, which has nothing to do with American Kennel Club rules, for a very specialized segment of the leather community. You're welcome. ■

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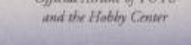
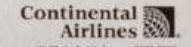
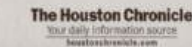
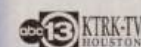
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Barbra Streisand

(The Advocate, 10/28/03, Anne Stockwell)

Anne Stockwell: The gay audience, our readership, has loved you from the start and still does. Do you know why?

Barbra Streisand: You know, it's so interesting—I just got Kevin Aucoin's scrapbook. . . Somebody's writing a book about him and was telling me how I influenced him as a young teenager, and they sent me this scrapbook with all my pictures in the '60s. [Aucoin, who died last year at the age of 40, was a world-renowned openly gay makeup artist who often worked with Streisand.]

His personal scrapbooks?

Yeah. [They were all about] how he identified with me and thought I was the most beautiful woman on earth. But I think he once told me—because he was a wonderful and divine human being, kind and courageous and so talented and very political and outspoken, which is rare—I think it's like he said, [speaking] for those who felt different. I emerged in the era of Sandra Dee and beach movies and little girls with turned-up noses. And I guess I was different and I refused to change for anybody. I was saying, "This is who I am, and I have something to say—listen to me." When people said, "Change this" and "Cut your nose off"—whatever they said about me—the put-downs didn't work.

Rob Lowe

(TV Guide, 10/11/03, Mary Murphy)

[Rob Lowe had] been playing Sam Seaborn on *The West Wing*, a part seemingly tailor-made for Lowe by *Wing*'s creator, Aaron Sorkin. . . But as the show progressed and Martin Sheen's President Josiah Bartlett rose in popularity, Lowe's role was cut back. . .

Money issues surfaced, too. Sheen, now clearly the star, was bumped to \$300,000 an episode. Lowe continued to make \$70,000 a show—not a bad paycheck, except when you work in Hollywood and you know a coworker is taking home nearly a quarter million more. Lowe was hurt by what he perceived as Sorkin's rejection. "Why didn't he know how much I loved him, how much I loved that show?" Lowe asks. "Why didn't he love me like I loved him? It's weird, considering it's another man, but that's as close as I can put it."

Chuck Palahniuk

(author, *The Fight Club*)

"When reporters call my friends, my friends start lying: 'Ah, yeah. He lives in a castle! He's a heroin addict!' And so they tell these contradictory stories, so it's fun for them." When the press makes references to Palahniuk's wife, everyone has a big giggle. "My lovely wife!" he smiles. In fact, Palahniuk has no wife, and declines to discuss his personal life on the record, preferring to keep his fans guessing (which they're not shy about doing). "I just don't want the spotlight pulled away from my work," he says.

Helmut Newton

(photographer)

The 82-year-old has a rep for womanizing, but he was a self-confessed "sissy" as a boy: "It didn't help that my mother dressed me like a little girl. I wore velvet suits with high stiff collars and enormous taffeta bows."

Queer Quotes

Compiled by Blase DiStefano

Margaret Cho

(OutTraveler, 11/03, Amy Weaver)

I find an inherent homophobia in hotel architecture, electricity, and wiring. I was at a lesbian Club Med week in the Bermuda Triangle, and the outlets were on the other side of the room from the bed. If you want to make a lesbian mad, don't give her an outlet for her vibrator.

Margaret Cho (pictured here in a publicity shot for her REVOLUTION tour): bad vibrations?



Macaulay Culkin (pictured here with Barbara Walters): gay vibrations? INSET: Culkin dolled up for *Party Monster*.

Macaulay Culkin

(20/20, 9/5/03, ABC)

Barbara Walters: Mac, you've been away from movies now for nine years. So now you come back in a low-budget movie [*Party Monster*] playing a cross-dressing, gay, sociopathic killer [Michael Alig]. Whatever happened to the kid from *Home Alone*?

Macaulay Culkin: Oh, gosh. I don't know. It's just something that just happened. It wasn't anything like I was aware of trying to break some kind of mold or some kind of image.

What intrigued you about Michael Alig?

It was a challenge. It was just so different than anything I'd ever seen before. The whole world was just so unique, it was something I had to do. It was so colorful. It was just so outrageous. And you wouldn't believe it unless it was true, so I had to be a part of it.

Michael Alig is gay. Correct.

And with very effeminate mannerisms, and you play him as gay with effeminate mannerisms. Uh-huh.

Are you concerned that people may think you're gay, or would you care if they did? I really don't care either way. I'm not, for the record. But no, really, that wasn't a problem for me.

Boy George

(The Advocate, 10/28/03, Michael Giltz)

[Boy] George increasingly thinks labels like gay, straight, and bi are useless. And if it seems like in the '80s we took 20 steps forward, now he sometimes feels "like we've taken 20 steps back. You've got shows on TV like, 'Let's make straight people look more gay.' No, love, that's the whole point. We like them when they look like they can fix our radiators."

RELIGION, SEX, & A BITCH WITH STYLE

Trembling Before G-d, O Fantasma, Legally Blonde 2, and more

THE HIDDEN LIVES OF GAY AND LESBIAN ORTHODOX AND HASIDIC JEWS

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-JAN STURGE, NEWSWEEK

THE FILM THAT'S CHANGING LIVES
TREMBLING BEFORE G-D
A FILM BY SANDI SIMCHA DUBOWSKI

Trembling Before G-d

Trembling Before G-d is an unprecedented feature documentary that shatters assumptions about faith, sexuality, and religious fundamentalism. Built around intimately told personal stories of Hasidic and Orthodox Jews who are gay and lesbian, the film portrays a group of people who face a profound dilemma—how to reconcile their passionate love for Judaism and the Divine with the drastic biblical prohibitions that forbid homosexuality. As the film unfolds, we meet a range of individuals—some hidden, some out—from the world's first openly gay Orthodox rabbi to closeted, married Hasidic gays and lesbians. Many have been tragically rejected and their pain is raw, yet with irony, humor, and resilience, they love, care, struggle, and argue with a tradition that is thousands of years old. Vividly shot with a courageous few over five years in Brooklyn, Jerusalem, Los Angeles, London, Miami, and San Francisco, Trembling Before G-d is an international project with global implications that strikes at the meaning of spirituality and tradition in the world. Included on this two-disc set: a look at the life-changing movement of the film around the world; interview with the director Sandi Simcha Dubowski; Tomboychik, the director's short film; more with the first openly gay Orthodox rabbi; and much more.

From New Yorker Films (www.newyorkerfilms.com). —Suzie Lynde

O Fantasma



Sérgio (Ricardo Meneses) spends his hours consumed by the loneliness of a cheap bed-and-breakfast, anonymous sex with men, and his job as a rubbish collector. Consumed by insatiable desire, he has long been stuck in a childhood shared by Lorde, the garbage dump dog, oblivious to the shadows that encircle him, such as the love that his female workmate Fátima (Beatriz Torcato) has for him, the strange vigilance of a local policeman, and his foreman's (Eurico Vieira) ambiguous desire. • One night, he happens upon the "phantom"

of his dreams, in the form of a macho motorcyclist (André Barbosa). Entranced, he begins a dangerous and erotic game of spying and preying upon the object of his obsession. As he realizes he is not in control of the game, he nevertheless continues, knowing full well he will lose. The very hands that wished to caress remain cuffed, addicted to rejection. The mask of his desire, the latex suit, becomes Sérgio's final dwelling. He is alone, no longer of this world. • Joao Pedro Rodrigues's sexually explicit, thought-provoking debut feature was named one of the top 10 films of the year by critic Alexander Horwath (Film Comment) and Brandon Judell (PopcornQ/PlanetOut.com). Kevin Thomas of the Los Angeles Times said O Fantasma is "a film that is as audacious as it is compelling and as dark as it is erotic!" —Troy Carrington

Hey, Happy!



Set in a Winnipeg of the imagination, Hey, Happy! is a queer contemporary fairy tale focusing on Sabu, a hot, sultry DJ, and his archival Spanky, a villainous hairdresser. Both are on manhunt to bed boys before the annual flooding of the town, which is viewed as the yearly apocalypse. While Sabu spends his time spinning discs and running an outdoor used-porn market, Spanky wanders the wasteland of his hometown with his posse of oversized chicks and their portable

continued on page 58

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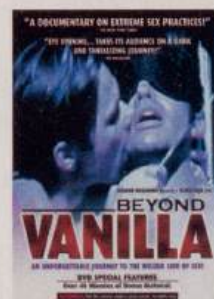
DVD/VHS continued from page 56

beauty salon. The two turn their adversarial worst when both shift their attention and affection toward Happy, a lovable simpleton who speaks with aliens. A truly bizarre love triangle ensues. The DVD contains a behind-the-scenes look on the set of the film; a commentary track by the film's writer/director Noam Gonick; the short film 1919 by Gonick, about the 1919 Winnipeg General Strike seen through the window of a gay Chinese bathhouse/barber shop; and more. From Strand Releasing (www.strandreleasing.com).

—Suzie Lynde

Beyond Vanilla

Stimulating but not pornographic, and informative without being judgmental, *Beyond Vanilla* is an unforgettable and eye-opening journey to the wilder side of sex. The film presents its revelatory subject matter in a clear, intelligent, and interesting way. With interviews, demonstrations, and a good dose of how-to instructions, this documentary covers the gamut of fetishes and S&M practices. From bondage, flogging, and fisting to knife play,



fire, and golden showers, director Claes Lilja takes the viewer beyond the stereotypical view of kinky sex. Sharing fantasies, experiences, and pleasures, the over-100-people interviewed in the film help blur boundaries and shed new light on sexuality and sexual practices. For the curious, the voyeur, or the enthusiast, *Beyond Vanilla* is a fascinating crossing into the world of high performance sexual athletes, where the boundaries of gay, straight, bi, or trans seem almost irrelevant. Lilja's subjects are academics, doctors, lawyers, pornographers, porn stars, sex workers, and fulfilled freelance hedonists who offer an insider's view of how to embrace extreme fantasies, helping to destigmatize a topic that many people are secretly interested in but are afraid to try. From Strand Releasing (www.strandreleasing.com). —TC

Legally Blonde 2: Red, White and Blonde



Silly? Well, yes. Bordering on ridiculous? Well, yes. But loads of fun? Hell, yes!

You won't have to have seen *Legally Blonde* to appreciate this ultra-sweet sequel. Elle Woods (Reese Witherspoon) is the perky heroine of this outrageously gay film. "Gay" film? Well, yes and no. The director, Charles Herman-Wurmfeld, is gay, and though Elle is not gay, Bruiser is. Bruiser is Elle's best friend . . . of the canine variety.

Backtracking, Elle is getting married, and she realizes she wants Bruiser's mom to attend the wedding (this is not *Citizen Kane*, OK?), but she doesn't know the bitch's whereabouts. She hires a private investigator, who locates the Chihuahua at an animal

testing facility. The remainder of the film entails fashion-conscious Elle getting a bill passed that will stop animal testing for makeup. The journey is joyous, mainly because of Elle, who is adorned in designer outfits, almost all pink; even the lighting that highlights her blonde locks is pink!

"She almost magically finds she can relate to every single person on one level or another," says Witherspoon of her character. "She doesn't think she's above or below anyone. She sees each person as an individual and finds the good in everyone."

Sally Field, who costars as Congresswoman Victoria Rudd, is almost wasted in a part that could have been called in by any number of less competent actresses; however, it's always a treat to see Field as a blonde.

So, put on your party pumps and enjoy the sisterhood social. From MGM Home Entertainment (www.mgm.com/dvd). —Blase DiStefano ■

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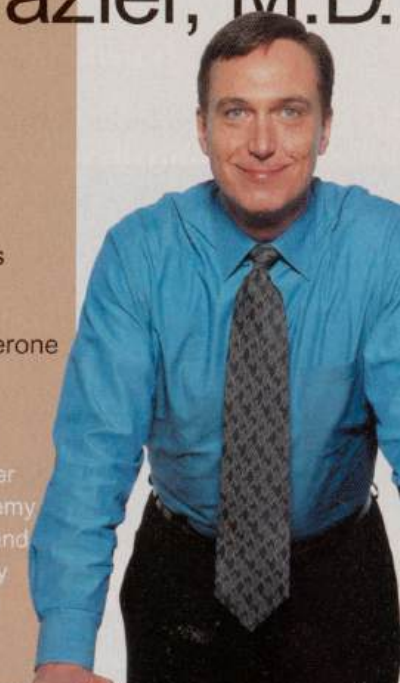
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TV GETS GAYER

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The cast of *A Minute with Stan Hooper* (clockwise from center): Norm Macdonald, Penelope Ann Miller, Brian Howe, Daniel Roebuck, Garret Dillahunt, Eric Lively, Reagan Dale Neis, Fred Willard.

For 10 years, Stan Hooper (Norm Macdonald) has been closing each episode of America's favorite news-magazine *Newsline* with his commentary, "A Minute with Stan Hooper." Hooper's minute presents real stories about real people from middle America... from a midtown Manhattan studio.

Looking to deliver a more honest "minute" and to live in the vanishing America he has commented on for a decade, Hooper moves with his wife (Penelope Ann Miller) to Waterford Falls, Wisconsin, a small town they passed through on their honeymoon 15 years ago, a town that embodies the old-fashioned values and idyllic lifestyle he has been championing.

When the Hoopers arrive in this "average small town," they find that it is anything but average. Among other interesting facts, the central meeting place is Petersen Boys' Diner, which also happens to be the post office, gas station, souvenir shop, and the place to buy videos, is owned by Lou Petersen (Garret Dillahunt) and Pete Petersen (Daniel Roebuck)... and they're not brothers.

A Minute with Stan Hooper airs Wednesdays on Fox at 7:30 p.m. —Suzie Lynde

Also on Fox

Arrested Development stars Jason Bateman and Portia de Rossi as siblings in a wildly dysfunctional family. David Cross (pictured) plays the sexually ambiguous jobless husband of de Rossi's character. In the premiere episode (November 2), he accidentally gets involved with a group of gay protesters, which makes him realize he wants to be an actor. The quirky show airs Sundays on Fox at 8:30 p.m. —Blase DiStefano



Abused and Catholic on Sundance

Director Mark Dowd, a British journalist who once studied for the priesthood, explores the sexual abuse scandal that has shocked the world and thrown the Catholic Church into crisis. He interviews male and female victims of abuse, along with current and former church officials, as he investigates the institutional response to mounting charges of abuse and cover-up. Reporting from Boston and Rome, Dowd considers how the definitive response to the crisis may come not from the Vatican, but from the ordinary churchgoers and clergy who are urging change. *Abused and Catholic* premieres on Sundance Channel, Monday, November 17, at 9 p.m. Repeat airings: 24th at 12:30 p.m., 25th at 4:20 a.m., and 28th at 9:30 a.m. To confirm schedule: www.sundancechannel.com. —Troy Carrington

Bob and Rose on Showtime

Bob (Alan Davies, *Jonathan Creek*) and Rose (Lesley Sharp, *The Full Monty*) meet while hailing taxis and quickly hit it off.



Bob and Rose stars (l-r) Jessica Stevenson, Alan Davies, and Lesley Sharp.

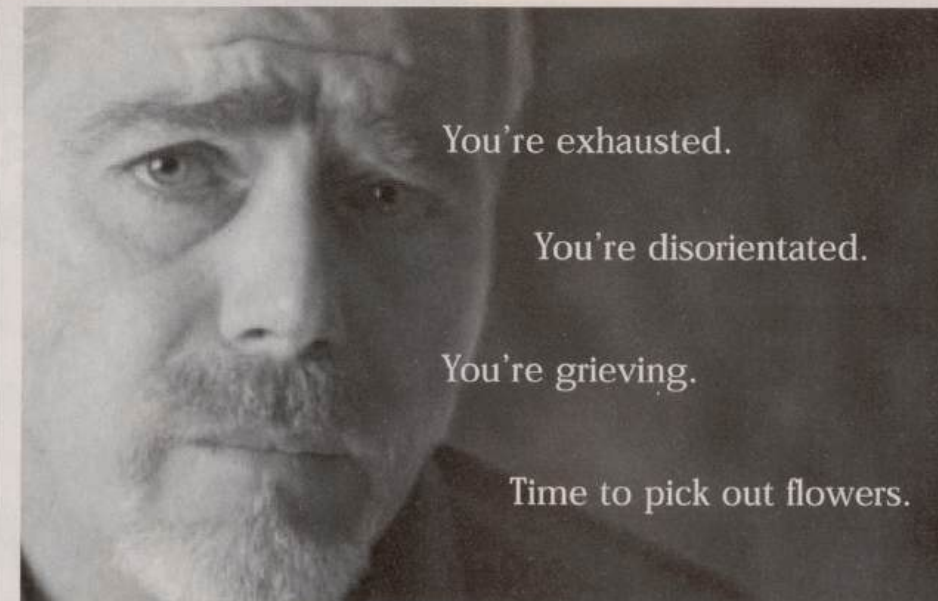
After Bob reveals he's gay, Rose tries to be content with the fact that they'll be nothing more than friends—that is, until an evening out ends in passionate lovemaking. Now a confused Bob must "come out" to his parents all over again by admitting he's dating a woman, and he must deal with his ex, Carl, who could potentially sabotage his relationship with Rose. To make matters worse, Bob's long-time friend Holly (Jessica Stevenson, *The Royal Family*) realizes she's jealous and if Bob's going to be with a woman, why not her? This six-episode series, airing on Showtime Women on Wednesdays, was written by Russell T. Davies, writer and creator of the British series *Queer as Folk*. The episodes began airing on October 22, but the previous synopsis gives you enough info to see the last four episodes that air each Wednesday in November. The complete series will be available to VOD subscribers starting November 26. And, at press time, the series was scheduled to be repeated on the main network in 2004. —SL ■

The Children's Hour on Turner Classic Movies

James Garner wants Audrey Hepburn. Shirley MacLaine wants Audrey Hepburn. It's a 1961 melodrama, so guess who gets Audrey Hepburn. Yeah, MacLaine not only loses Hepburn, but she also loses her life... well, not exactly loses her life, but takes it—by hanging herself. Hey, it's 1961, and director William Wyler was probably a tad bit nervous about all that lesbian stuff. But it's still worth a watch, if for no other reason than to see what people thought about homosexuals some 40 years ago. Just try not to take it too seriously. • For those of you who start to fade at about 10 at night, you'll have to set that VCR, because Turner Classic Movies (TCM) is airing *The Children's Hour* on Tuesday, November 25, at 11 p.m. Be sure to let the tape also record the following hour-long program (1–2 a.m.), *Private Screenings: Shirley MacLaine*, on which MacLaine talks to Robert Osborne about many of her films, including interesting tidbits about *The Children's Hour*. • FYI: Many of MacLaine's films will be shown starting at 7 p.m. every Tuesday in November on TCM. Check local listings for schedule or visit www.turnerclassicmovies.com. —BD



More than an hour: Shirley MacLaine (l) and Audrey Hepburn love each other, but MacLaine really loves Hepburn in *The Children's Hour*. Inset: MacLaine interviewed on TCM.



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Out in the Arts

by D.L. Groover

GIVING A BATH TO THE MOST BEAUTIFUL MAN IN THE WORLD.

You're 131/2 feet high, perfectly proportioned, godly muscled in the flush of young manhood, and gloriously naked. You're also 500 years old and haven't seen the sun since 1873. If you're **Michelangelo's** marble masterpiece of Renaissance sculpture, *David*, you're ripe for a restorative cleaning. Since his bath is taking place in Italy, scandal and invective buzz around his full mane of curls like mosquitoes along the banks of the Arno.

Michelangelo fashioned his Renaissance man—intended to grace the parapets of Florence's cathedral—from an unusually shallow block of marble that had previously been discarded by two sculptors as unworkable. When the immense naked man was unveiled in 1504, the church authorities balked at the up-close-and-personal nudity and hastily decided not to exhibit it, even way up on the roofline. After much bickering among Florence's civic leaders, who included **Leonardo da Vinci**, Michelangelo's great work was designated to adorn the city's town hall in the Piazza della Signoria. Florence was flush in patriotic flag-waving, struggling to retain its independence among rapacious neighboring city-states. The 26-year-old Michelangelo's statue was the ultimate symbol of city valor, strength, and coiled-spring anger. The nude giant embodied all the virtues Florence wanted to flaunt to the world.

Apparently, the Republic of Florence didn't want to show *everything*, for the prudish Florentines pelted the sublime *Il Gigante* upon its unveiling on September 8, 1504. Lightning struck the pedestal in 1512, and David lost his left arm in 1527 during a riot when the Medici returned to Florence—it was glued back on with stucco and metal pins. By 1545, gilded fig leaves covered David's privates. For 31/2 centuries, he suffered the indignities of weather, pollution, and pigeons—not to mention a misguided hydrochloric acid wash in 1843, which stripped whatever remained of Michelangelo's original protective wax coating as well as most of the natural marble coloring. Finally, David was brought out of the rain and given pride of place in his own classical rotunda inside the Galleria dell'Accademia. In 1991 a deranged artist smashed one of his stone toes with a hammer, while a century of interior grime and dust accumulated on his shoulders and inside his ears. It was time to wash his face and unclog his pores.

But then more chaos. Every art conservator in the world had an opinion, but no one

agreed. Cleaning was good. Cleaning was bad. Cleaning would restore David's glory. Cleaning would destroy David's beauty. Dry brushes would be best. No, distilled water should be used to remove caked-on grime that a bristle can't reach, commanded Opificio delle Pietre Dure, Italy's governmental department for art restoration. Scheduled to begin September 2001, the cleansing was put on hold when the Accademia's restorer, a specialist in the works of Michelangelo, resigned in protest over what she was asked to do to the statue. International critics piped in but they, too, couldn't form a consensus on how best to handle the big lug.

After repeated delays, expert art restorer **Cinzia Parnigoni** was hired to lay gentle hands upon the body. First, the area to be cleaned

will be dusted, then covered with a sheet of rice paper moistened with distilled water, and topped with what the restorers call a "mud pack" of cellulose pulp and clay. The water seeps through this mask and sucks up the dirt, which is then trapped in the clay. After 15 minutes, the paper facial is removed. Q-tips dipped in mineral spirits spot clean stubborn wax stains.

It seems simple enough, but the method is controversial. Critics decry the blanching that can occur, and many want the world's most famous sculpture to be left alone. Meanwhile, the great artwork gets dirtier day by day.

"This is not a restoration. It's just maintenance," trumpeted Tuscany's art superintendent **Antonio Paolucci** the day cleaning began.

Bath time: David finally gets clean. This photo, taken by Isaac Ruperto Ayala, is available at Hollywood Frame Gallery.



"David will be 500 years old in 2004. He needs to be more presentable for his birthday."

He's certainly got the suit for it. We hope *David* will survive the contemporary cleansing so he can again live up to **Vasari's** 1550 description:

For in it may be seen most beautiful contours of legs, with attachments of limbs and slender outlines of flanks that are divine. Nor has there ever been seen a pose so easy, or any grace to equal that in this work, or feet, hands and head so well in accord, one member with another, in harmony, design, and excellence of artistry. And, of a truth, whoever has seen this work need not trouble to see any other work executed in sculpture, either in our own or in other times, by no matter what craftsman.

RECOMMENDED OUTINGS

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Through November 16
Alley Theatre

Restaurant haute culture gets shish-kebabbed in **Becky Mode's** hilarious satire. In a tour de force role, **Jamison Stern** is the power broker from hell as he mans the phone reservations for Manhattan's hottest new eatery. He also plays about 39 other characters, from the harried maitre d' to a whiny **Naomi Campbell**. Next time you're at Tony's or Café Annie, you may see the humor.

The Dead

November 6–December 7
Main Street Theatre

A Tony Award-winning musical based upon **James Joyce's** most famous short story. During a family holiday party in Edwardian Dublin, husband Gabriel watches the life drain out of his life, his marriage, his very soul.

Rhinoceros

November 20–December 13

Infernal Bridegroom Productions

In this 1959 black comedy from master playwright **Eugene Ionesco**, everyman Berenger wakes to find a rhinoceros rampaging through town. To his horror, everyone around him turns into one, too. Ionesco's rant against conformity has been banned as dangerously anti-Fascist, anti-Communist, anti-Peronist, or anti-bourgeois, depending on one's point of view. Everyone in power seems scared of his message.

D.L. Groover writes monthly on the arts for OutSmart magazine.

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GrooveOut

by Gregg Shapiro



WHATEVER RUFUS WANTS

*The openly gay singer
chats about his
two-part release,
Want*

Rufus Wainwright never ceases to amaze. Following his highly praised self-titled debut album and the equally acclaimed follow-up *Poses*, the openly gay Wainwright is releasing his most ambitious and thrilling project, a two-part collection called *Want One* and *Want Two*. The first part, released in late September, is Wainwright's most mature and breathtaking album, beginning with the choral "Oh What a World," in which he declares, "Men reading fashion magazines/Oh what a world it seems we live in/Straight men, oh what a world we live in," before being washed over by an orchestra. Love, New York City, his family, telephones, and the occasional musical celebrity

sighting are some of the topics Wainwright touches on in his distinctive way. If the brilliant "Movies of Myself" doesn't become a hit single, then all hope may well be lost for popular culture.

Gregg Shapiro: On your new album, *Want One* [DreamWorks], you worked with producer Marius deVries, who has produced albums by Björk, Madonna, David Gray, Alison Moyet, and others. How did you come to work with him?

Rufus Wainwright: I came to work with him through Lenny Waronker, my A&R guy [at DreamWorks]. Also through the fact that they were willing to hire him, even though

off the beaten path with this record. The songs are dirtier, a bit edgier—some of them almost like hip-hop songs, yet with her solemn voice remaining intact. This is likely due in no small part to the creative process this time around, as she rented a house in the middle of nowhere in her home country of England and installed a studio in it where she and brother Rollo, along with producer Rick Nowels, wrote all of the tracks for this album. Let's hope she surpasses Eminem's popularity this time around. From Arista (www.arista.com). —Lance Walker

GrooveOut Shorts

Dido Life for Rent

It has been a few years now since our favorite closet homo/gay-basher Eminem took Dido's 1999 song "Thankyou" and completely gutted the melody from it to hold up his dark and self-loving track "Stan." Though the lines in her song had a pointless connection to his own, and it was obvious that whitey had simply ripped it off to make his own "composition" somewhat listenable, the effect it had on her career cannot be downplayed. She has since gone multi-platinum, and with the freedom that comes along with that sort of immediate popularity, she has gone a bit



Various Artists

The Celtic Circle: Legend- ary Music from a Mystic World

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PEACHES INSET - HADLEY HUDSON

he's very expensive [laughs]. Let me just say that he's worth his weight in gold and that I'm so happy that I did get a chance to work with him.

From your perspective, in what ways would you say that this album differs from your previous two?

I do consider it as a part of a canon—in terms of first, second, third, I do think it's connected to the other albums. With this one, the main difference is that the first record took three years. The second record took a year and a half. This record [*Want One*] and the other record [*Want Two*] took six months [laughs]. I cut 30 tracks in six months. Essentially what's different about this record is that I just let it make itself. I wasn't as concerned with the xylophone parts. I was more concerned about it being a work that was more organic and that was fun to make [laughs].

When do you anticipate *Want Two* will be released?

I anticipate it in six months. It's already made, and I have to preface this by saying that this has never been done before—an album that is part one and part two released à la *Lord of the Rings*. There is similar artwork on both records. I hope to liken it to a Thomas Hardy novel or *War and Peace* [laughs].

Both your sister Martha and your mother Kate perform on *Want*, and there are other musical family members such as Teddy Thompson and his mother Linda, and Jenni Muldaur, daughter of Maria and Geoff. Do you feel a strong connection to people in musical families?

Yeah. I think the music business is so difficult to survive in, and my family and Linda Thompson and the Muldaurs are perhaps more attuned to that up-and-down roller-

abundantly present in this collection. This can be fully heard in this essential two-CD compilation featuring the best traditional and contemporary Celtic music performed by the genre's most acclaimed artists. Here bona fide superstars Bono, Sarah McLachlan, the Corrs, and Sinead O'Connor appear beside venerable traditional Celtic musicians like the Chieftains, Clannad, and Loreena McKennitt. Contemporary artists like Phil Coulter, Vangelis, and Anuna update this musically rich tradition with ethereal soundscapes that flow seamlessly into sweeping Celtic-influenced film scores from blockbuster films such as *Lord of the Rings*, *Harry Potter*, and *Braveheart*. Available from Windham Hill (www.windham.com). —Suzie Lynde

Paul van Dyk Reflections

Paul van Dyk continues to create a distinctive

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coaster ride as opposed to other families that I've known [laughs]. We certainly stick together. The Thompsons, the Muldaurs, the McGarrigles, and the Wainwrights have all had ups and downs in their careers and have all had to rely on their ability to survive.

On the subject of family, you mention your parents in a couple of songs—"Oh What a World" ["Oh what a world my parents gave me"] and "Want" ["I just want to be my Dad/With a slight sprinkling of my mother"]—on *Want One*. Is it nice

to be able to have freedom to refer to them in songs? Yeah. It, again, is a tradition. My mother has written about me, and my father has written about me. I'm just avenging [laughs].

New York City is referred to in a few songs including "I Don't Know What It Is" ["... heading for Poland or limbo or Lower Manhattan"], "11:11" ["Realized that everything really does/Happen in Manhattan"], and "14th Street." How does New York fuel your work?

I was here for September 11. I actually started my tour, with Tori Amos, right after September 11. I was out there for two months. That actually ended up being a therapeutic good thing. Tori was good music to listen to and perform with after that. But I

really believe that I, along with many other people, was in sort of a yearlong depression or shock—mostly shock—after that event. Then there was sort of a crash for me last summer that a lot of people in my circle went through as well—that it took about a year for that incident to sink in. I really had to come back to New York and spend time in this city on another level, as opposed to the way that I did in *Poses*, which was partying a lot and treating New York as if it was 1927.



A little less decadence.

Yeah, it had to be a little less decadent because this city had become a lot less decadent. As well as healing my own exhausted self, New York was doing the same thing. I fell into step with that.

And do you have favorite nightlife spots in New York?

I'm not going out as much as I did before [laughs]. But I have some restaurants that I like and some bars that I like to frequent. I'm more into sitting at home and watching C-Span.

Phones are also instrumental to two songs: "Vicious World" ["Thought that maybe we'd fall in love over the phone"] and "Vibrate" ["My phone's on vibrate for you"]. Are you a phone person or do you prefer face-to-face contact?

I spend a lot of time on the phone doing interviews. I'm sort of a reluctant phone person. I actually kind of hate the phone.

The love songs on *Want One* range from the buoyant "Movies of Myself" to the brokenhearted "Go or Go Ahead," "Harvester of Hearts," and "Dinner at Eight." Are you currently buoyant or brokenhearted when it comes to love?

I realized that in a lot of those love affairs that I was searching for and getting brokenhearted over, I was actually searching for myself. At present, I think I met myself somewhere, and I'm getting to know myself a little better. I certainly have sweeping moments of romantic longing, but I realized that the rules of attraction are that the better you know yourself and the more you love yourself, the more chances you have of that happening [laughs]. I don't know if that's true or not, but I'm going with that.

That sounds like a good plan. Beginning with your first album, you have a gift for name checking in your songs, whether it's characters from operas or contemporary pop culture references, like in "California" from *Poses*, or the straight men reading fashion magazines in "Oh What a World" and the list including John Lennon, Leonard Cohen, John Lithgow, and Jane Curtin in "Want," on *Want One*. Do you enjoy making those kinds of references?

Yeah, I guess I'm a bit of a namedropper.

But you do it in a good way.

I think that, certainly in the last one you mentioned, "John Lennon, Leonard Cohen, John Lithgow and Jane Curtin," I had to bookend those first two names that sort of

poked fun at my trying to be John Lennon or thinking that I'm anywhere near as good as John Lennon or Leonard Cohen. I think it's really inescapable in our society. Our society is ruled by celebrity, and those names, or certain names, should be put in the dictionary to categorize what people base their lives on. Like Pamela Anderson—that should be an adjective. We're such a cult of that right now that you've got to use it because people react.

Each of your albums has had a wonderful, straightforward pop song near the beginning—"April Fools" from your debut, "California" from *Poses*, and on *Want One*, there is the amazing "Movies of Myself." What can you tell me about the genesis of those songs?

I think they are all songs that I was reluctant to enjoy [laughs] at first. Because sometimes I feel like my pop sensibilities are slightly dated. I always liked pop songs that make you feel good, and I'm always afraid to do that. I think it relates a lot to when I was a young child and I would sing in my living room, and I had this older cousin who was a punk rocker and he would laugh hysterically while I sang, because he thought I was really uncool.

Punks tend to be kind of cynical.

Yes. I think those songs harken back to that era. I'm always afraid to put those songs on [an album] just because they are unabashedly uplifting.

I, for one, am really glad that you do.

Usually in the last moment I do, and people are usually happy to hear them.

As in the past, you remain a presence on soundtracks, most recently *Stormy Weather: The Songs of Harold Arlen and I Am Sam*. What does having your voice heard in a movie and being a part of a movie soundtrack mean to you?

I'm actually going to be in the new [Martin] Scorsese movie *The Aviator*, which is with Leonardo DiCaprio and Cate Blanchett. I sing a song, a Gershwin song, in that.

Are you playing a nightclub entertainer?

Yeah. I'm a Bing Crosby character at the Coconut Grove. Also Martha [Wainwright] is in it, too. She's like a '40s singer. What it means to me is that I'm surrounding Hollywood and pretty soon—look out, Leo!

At the 2003 OutMusic Awards in June, Gregg Shapiro received the annual honor for Outstanding Support, which recognizes involvement by non-musicians in furthering the work of GLBT performers.

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GrooveOut Shorts

continued from previous page

brand of electronic dance music that continually expands the horizons of an ever-growing electronic music culture. With vocalists like Jan Johnston ("Like a Friend," "Homage"), Brit-rock act Vega 4 ("Time of Our Lives"), and German hip-hop artist DJ Tomekk ("Knowledge"), *Reflections* is the gay-friendly singer's most ambitious and accomplished album to date. Fans will find his characteristic dance-floor anthems intertwined with vocal-encumbered tracks. The CD includes van Dyk's current single "Nothing But You." From Mute Records (www.mute.com). For more info: www.paulvan dyk.com. —Troy Carrington



The Lovelies White Leather

The harmonies are here, the playing is here, and the image is definitely here, but the album from this coed trio from Milwaukee, despite all their efforts, still leaves something to be desired. Perhaps it is in the turns that the songs take that they lose us. Almost all of the 14 tracks on this disc start off in interesting directions, but the chord progressions fall flat, or just fail to sharpen up. It's as if the listener expects the songs to move in one direction, but the turns they do take are a surprise, and though not an unpleasant surprise, just one that leaves the songs a bit too linear in the end. The Lovelies do rock, though, and they will only continue to get better at that part. They're also going to be able to save a lot of dough along the



way seeing as they all three use the same bottle of white hair bleach. From Force MP (www.forcemp.com). —LW

Various Artists Lost in Boston

Lost in Boston is a collection of songs cut from many musical theater's finest shows, including *Chicago*, *West Side Story*, *The King and I*, *Annie Get Your Gun*, *Fiddler on the Roof*, *Peter Pan*, *Promises, Promises*, *110 in the Shade*, *Fiorello!*, *Silk Stockings*, *Once on This Island*, *The Happy Time*, and *The Mystery of Edwin Drood*. These shows dropped great songs during tryout and preview periods—due to time constraints, physical production demands, changes in story line, or



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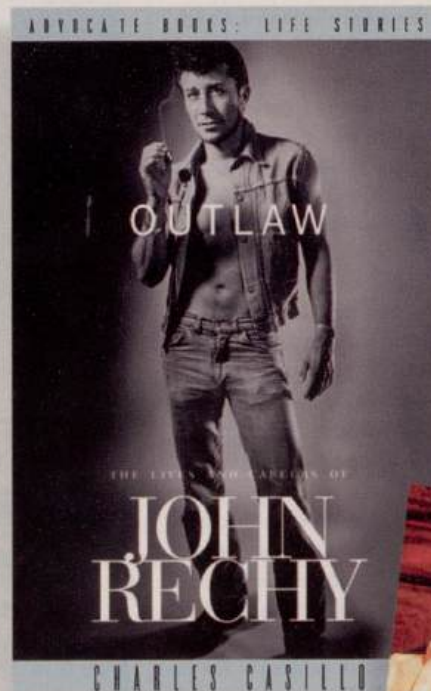
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ReadOut

by Dan Aiello

COMFORT OF NIGHT

*A great and
controversial
John Rechy
novel meant
salvation for
his biographer*



Charles Casillo
(inset) wrote the
new bio of the
El Paso native.



By the age of 15, Charles Casillo was as adept at riding New York subways as he was clumsy at sports. And for this awkward teenager who, with puberty, found himself the target of every bully at school ("I was like Carrie without the telepathic powers," he jokes), the subways provided more than just transportation. They offered a means of escape. The lonely boy who rode the trains, who is now 35, grew up to be the biographer of one of the most controversial writers of the 20th century, the novelist and male prostitute John Rechy. Casillo's new book about the infamous hustler, writer, and sexual renegade is *Outlaw: The Lives and Careers of John Rechy*

(Alyson Publications), and the story of how Casillo became Rechy's biographer is as interesting as anything in the book itself.

Every weekend, Casillo would jump on the E train at the Union Turnpike station, usually without any planned destination. He had to ride the trains, and not just for his sake. "My parents did the best that they could and loved me and worried about me a lot," he says. "They knew I had no friends, and I could see how much it upset them when I would spend the whole weekend at home alone in my room. I began riding the trains so that they would think I had a busy, active

social life, like my younger brother. I didn't want them to worry," he says. So to protect his parents from anxiety and at the same time avoid his tormentors around his tough Italian-American neighborhood in Queens, Casillo took the subway.

At first the train rides served only to waste time—sometimes all day, but always long enough to keep his parents from discovering his pain. But in time, Casillo began to get off at different stops and explore Manhattan—a few train stops but a world away from Queens. On one of those Saturday excursions to Manhattan, Casillo found a piece of himself.

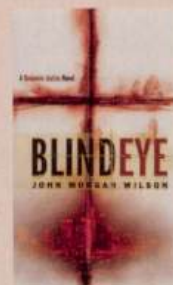
This great discovery for Casillo occurred in a shop that sells discovery every day, (usually at a discount), and maybe that's why a 15-year-old kid wasn't expecting that a Barnes & Noble bookstore would have his future sitting on a shelf. But it was there he discovered *City of Night*, the Rechy novel written years earlier. Casillo claims it was life-altering for a gay kid who had never known any world but his own unhappy one. For Casillo, *City of Night* was much more than a book; it was a vessel of discovery, hope, and salvation. And although he didn't know it that afternoon, finding that book would eventually lead Casillo to his future not just as a writer but as the biographer of the man who had written the book he was holding in his hands.

"I've said this a lot, but discovering this novel was a turning point in my life," Casillo says now of his discovery 20 years ago. "The book seemed to jump off the shelf at me, demanding me to read it. It's difficult to explain, but I'll never forget how I felt the moment I picked it up and began to read the back cover."

On the book's jacket Casillo read a compelling description, "an exposé on the homosexual underground lifestyle." In fact,

ReadOut Shorts

Blind Eye
John Morgan Wilson
St. Martin's Minotaur



Since the publication of his Edgar Award-winning book *Simple Justice*, in 1996, John Morgan Wilson has earned a reputation as one of the more distinguished and controversial authors in the mystery field.

• *Simple Justice* introduced the dark, character-driven Benjamin Justice mystery series, starring a washed-up investigative reporter ruined by scandal and seeking redemption by solving some of L.A.'s most baffling

murders. Child abuse, political corruption, racism, economic injustice, and AIDS have been among the issues Wilson has tackled in his novels, with storylines that avoid pat and easy conclusions. • *Justice* is also HIV-positive. In addition to winning a coveted Edgar from the Mystery Writers of America, the Benjamin Justice series has also earned two Lambda Literary Awards for best gay men's mystery. *USA Today* said the series was "as addictive as Sue Grafton's, James Lee Burke's, or Patricia Cromwell's." • *Blind Eye* is Wilson's most controversial. Set against a backdrop of the sex-abuse scandal currently rocking the Catholic Church in L.A., with a sinister twist inspired by today's headlines, it is a disturbing whodunit. —Troy Carrington

The Distant Echo
Val McDermid
St. Martin's Minotaur

An intricate mystery that charts the course of the



friendship between four college students at St. Andrew's School in Scotland. *The Distant Echo* begins during a snowstorm as the young men stumble back to their dormitory, drunk after a night of partying. They take a shortcut through a graveyard and find the body of Rosie Duff, a bartender they all know. These four boys, covered in blood, are the only suspects. But the case is never resolved. • Twenty-five years later, the police are mounting a cold case review, and some young and eager detectives are looking at the killing. At the same time, one by one, the four former college boys are dying off—each death a bit more mysterious than the previous one. • Ultimately, it becomes

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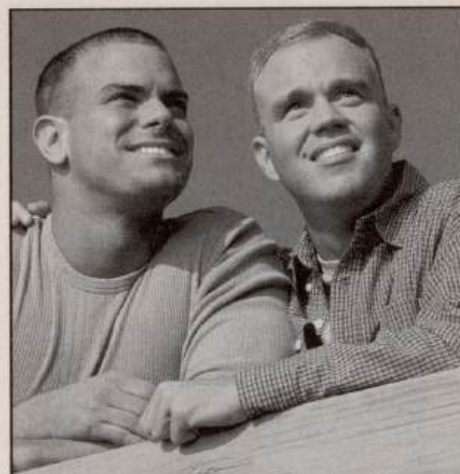
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ReadOut continued from previous page

according to Casillo, *City of Night* was the first true documentation of gay life in the 1950s. Writers including Gore Vidal and Tennessee Williams wrote about gay themes, but the situations were veiled. Rechy's language and characters were very "in your face," but written in a very beautiful, poetic prose. "I never realized that any situation, no matter how decadent or seedy, could be turned into literature," Casillo says.

He began reading the book while still at the bookstore. "I wasn't out to my family, and I certainly had no friends to tell, but I had admitted to myself that I was gay and I think I was looking for some answers. But it seems to me that the book found me. It wasn't the male hustling aspect that fascinated me so much. *City of Night* told me that I was not alone. I wasn't the only one in the world who was an outcast or a misfit. I wasn't the only one developing masks to hide my true self. Rechy's novel was filled with lonely, searching, hiding, characters. Reading it helped me come to terms with who I was."

Years before Casillo encountered it, *City of Night* had shocked the literary world of conservative America when it was published in 1963, offering a candid account of the experiences of a young gay man living a homosexual lifestyle from New York to Los Angeles. But Charles Casillo didn't live in the literary world. He lived in Queens, and to him John Rechy's book was not shocking. It was comforting—and a comfort, in fact, that would last a lifetime.

"The motive and the characters are all very well drawn out. Rechy is a great writer," Casillo says. He believes Rechy's autobiographical novel was the first real look at life for a gay man and the big city's underground homosexual society during one of this nation's most conservative eras. His experiences, the people he encountered, and the emotional reasons for his decisions give us a rare glimpse into the fear and hardships gay men endured during this time and how Rechy and the men he met managed to survive.

Years after first reading the book, Casillo's and Rechy's paths crossed again. In 1999 Casillo, now a writer, learned that Rechy was teaching creative writing at the University of Southern California. "I'd wanted to meet him since I first read *City of Night*," says Casillo, whose first cautious attempt to meet Rechy was with a letter addressed to the university. "I wanted to write a profile on him for a new magazine, and because he had a new novel coming out, he agreed to an interview. John liked the resulting article, and we talked about me writing his biography." As a result, Casillo spent the next three years getting to know Rechy before completing the biography.

"He was very guarded at first," Casillo explains. "John has many sides to him. After having only known him through his work, I expected someone darker, broody, or private, yet I found him to be very friendly, outgoing. But sometimes he would be more reserved, aloof. He could also be tough and demanding. I never knew what to expect. He can turn on any persona, a skill he mostly developed as

a hustler on the streets. They're all a part of who he really is, making him a very complicated person and difficult to figure out. In my book I explore him as much as is humanly possible, but people like John Rechy always keep a private, internal life that they don't share with anyone. Because I was writing about him over a period of time, I think I offer the reader a good understanding of who he is. As a hustler, he taught himself how to turn on different personalities, but over the course of three years, there were times he was pleased with me, times he was displeased, times he was apprehensive—and because I've seen him in all those situations, I saw many sides of him and I think I capture that."

About his life as a hustler, Rechy recalled to Casillo, "I was pulled into that world so quickly—as if I rehearsed it in dreams, acted it out, without remembering. There I was on the street, I looked around, and I had been observing the hustlers only for a few moments when I assumed the stance. And I had been there a few minutes when a Mr. Klein came by and spoke the words embedded in my mind: 'I'll give you 10 bucks and I don't give a damn for you.' Those were the first words I heard hustling. And it was as if I had always been listening for those words, waiting all my life. Like waking up. It was extraordinary."

Casillo's exploration of Rechy's life is as much a story about male prostitution as *Romeo and Juliet* is a story about slow mail service in Renaissance Italy. "You have to remember that at the time John was coming

out, homosexuality was classified by the scientific community as a mental illness," Casillo explains. "A lot of guys, like John, used prostitution as a way to come to terms with being gay. Basically, they convinced themselves that if money was involved then they weren't homosexual." Casillo believes that taking the time to appreciate the historic context of the choices Rechy made and the motives for those decisions allows the reader

"I had been observing the hustlers only for a few moments when I assumed the stance. And I had been there a few minutes when a Mr. Klein came by and spoke the words embedded in my mind: 'I'll give you 10 bucks and I don't give a damn for you.'"

to understand the very vulnerable and human side of his subject. What Casillo hopes will be revealed by his work is that we are more alike than different—and to appreciate that is to allow for greater acceptance of all people, regardless of their current situations.

Although *City of Night* is a novel based on Rechy's life, it was written when he was 30, more than 40 years ago. Casillo's biography discloses aspects of the novel that were disguised for the protection of individuals Rechy knew at the time and covers the next four decades of life for Rechy.

"Knowing him is always exciting. He'll always be a compelling person," Casillo says. "Getting to know him, I came to realize my spiritual connection to him, but I believe anyone who meets this man realizes he is someone with a story behind him." Casillo continues to see Rechy, now 72.

"The whole world has changed since *City of Night* was written and since I was growing up. We've had Boy George, *Ellen*, *Will & Grace*, and *Queer as Folk*. It's now a much more open environment, and it's a safer world. But the kind of loneliness you feel as a misfit or outcast still makes *City of Night* eternal and relevant. It's a story of vulnerability, the emotions and fears that are universal and part of the experience of life. That's why so many women read and are moved by *City of Night*. Although they might not be able to relate to the specific experiences of the character, everyone can relate to the emotions of the character and understand the choices they make."

"I think we all have a little bit of a hustler in us. In the gay community so much value is placed on our beauty that at some point I think we all have felt that urge to want to test our value. I never stood out on the streets like John, but we've all had the need for that affirmation, and for most people understanding that that need is a universal one is key to learning to judge others less by appreciating that we have more in common than different."

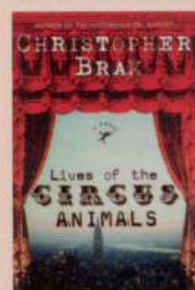
Dan Aiello, who lives in Sacramento, regularly writes for gay-and-lesbian publications in California and Florida.

ReadOut Shorts continued from previous page

clear that there is one person willing to do anything to make sure Duff's killer is never found out. • Val McDermid's gift for outlining the darkest parts of the human psyche can be startling. As the *Times Literary Supplement* points out, "Without flinching from the pain inflicted on murder victims and their families, or any of the manifold sorts of misery human beings can visit on each other, Val McDermid has used the crime genre to write a novel that, above everything else, celebrates life and loyalty." • McDermid, who is openly lesbian, won the Los Angeles Times Book Prize, the Anthony Award, the Dilys Prize, and was nominated for the Edgar Award for *A Place of Execution*. —Suzie Lynde

Lives of the Circus Animals Christopher Bram

William Morrow (an imprint of HarperCollins Publishers) In *Lives of the Circus Animals*, Christopher Bram explores contemporary New York theater, spending several days and nights with a wonderfully motley group of men and women. • There is Caleb Doyle, a hot new playwright



whose newest play just bombed. His sister Jessie also loves theater but has no outlet for her gifts except to work as personal assistant to British actor Henry Lewse, the "Hamlet of his generation," while he does a Broadway musical. Henry loves Shakespeare, money, grass, and boys. • Then there's Frank Earp, an ex-actor who courts Jessie and is directing a pack of acting students in a homemade play. Among the students is Toby Vogler, a nice kid from the Midwest who has a whole other career at night. Toby was once Caleb Doyle's boyfriend. • Overseeing this world like an unhappy god is Kenneth Prager, second-string theater critic for the *New York Times*. "I don't want people to love me," he tells his therapist. "I just don't want them to hate me." • And there's Molly Doyle, Caleb and Jessie's mother, who has never seen one of her son's plays, even though she lives only an hour outside of New York. • Leaping from one life to another, one day to the next, the novel throws these people together in a serious comedy about love and work and make-believe. *Lives of*

the *Circus Animals* is like a cross between a Mozart opera and a Preston Sturges movie. A look at theater people who are just like everyone else, only more so, it's a comic celebration of how we all strive to stay sane while living in the shadow of those two imposters, success and failure. —TC

Please Don't Kill the Freshman Zoe Trope

Harper Tempest (an imprint of HarperCollins Publishers)



Whoever said that high school was supposed to be the best time of your life was a liar. Seventeen-year-old author and recent high school graduate, the pseudonymous Zoe Trope, speaks the truth, the whole truth, and nothing but the truth about high school in her new deeply affecting memoir *Please Don't Kill the Freshman*. • As a freshman in high school, Trope started to e-mail her creative writing teacher journal entries. Those entries were the basis of her best-selling chapbook. *Please Don't Kill the Freshman* is an expanded version of that chapbook and provides even more details about

Trope's high school experiences. The memoir is filled with her keen observations on self-discovery, sexuality, boredom, drugs, and thoughts about the future. • Zoe Trope exists. She was born in 1986 and graduated from high school with the class of 2003 in Oregon. —SL

Around the World with Auntie Mame

Patrick Dennis (pen name of Edward Everett Tanner III) Broadway Books (a division of Random House)



In 1955, *Auntie Mame* spent 112 weeks on the *New York Times* bestseller list. Three years later, the film version appeared with a tour-de-force performance by Rosalind Russell. That same year (1958) also brought the book's sequel, *Around the World with Auntie Mame*. • If you've seen the film, you won't be able to read a word of this reprint without picturing Rosalind Russell and Coral Browne (Mame's best friend Vera Charles). Not that that's a bad thing. No, on the contrary, it's like a seamless continuation of the outrageous life of Mame Dennis Beauregard Jackson Pickett Burnside. • Narrated

once again by Mame's fictional deadpan nephew Patrick Dennis, *Around the World with Auntie Mame* takes readers on a whirlwind tour of Paris, London, and Lebanon, all scenic backgrounds to Mame's antics. —Blase DiStefano

The Sappho History Margaret Reynolds

St. Martin's Press (Palgrave Macmillan)



The Sappho History traces the story of the reception of Sappho's poetry and her afterlife in literature and art from the Romantic period to the present day. For women writers in the Romantic period, she symbolized possibility. For the young Tennyson, she was a private ancestor, helping him make his own name as a poet. Author Margaret Reynolds demonstrates how Sappho's themes of desire, loss, and the memory of desire are recovered and refashioned in her successors' works. Richly illustrated, *The Sappho History* provides a new view of Western culture. —SL ■

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KeyStar Event Complex boasts 4000 square feet of meeting space, and is divided into three tastefully appointed rooms providing space and event coordination.

Buck says, "We're so proud to be a part of Houston's GLBT community, and our unique space is ideal for so many types of gatherings. We envision providing space and event coordination for all sorts of diverse functions, from seminars and training meetings, to fundraisers, private parties, weddings, and holy unions. The two downstairs rooms are ideal to showcase new artists and entertainers. In fact, we will always have our walls decorated with the works of local artists."

KeyStar's staff brings over 30 years of experience in the event planning, fundraising, and training industry. This allows clients to make one call to KeyStar, describe the event, the anticipated number of participants and budget, and voilà... the event coordinators will take it from there! KeyStar assists clients in selecting a caterer, developing a menu, deciding on room decorations, and the table settings. Unlike hotels, restaurants, and other venues, KeyStar welcomes any catering company that the client desires, and provides a beautifully outfitted kitchen for the catering staff.



KeyStar Event Complex is located in the heart of the Montrose entertainment district.



KeyStar can easily host 500 guests for receptions.

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Choosing the right venue is critical for the success of any event, which is why so much attention was given to the amenities of the KeyStar Event Complex. Amenities include valet parking, ample restroom facilities (1st-floor restrooms are ADA accessible), new audio equipment, adjustable lighting, and upscale conference tables, banquet rounds, and chairs.

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my partner was a man. And has a penis. But I don't know that that means anything other than that.

I've always just said, "Well, everybody's really kind of bisexual." But the way you word it is so much better.

Well, I've said "bisexual," too, but the problem when you say "bisexual" is that people envision you out in a different gay bar and straight bar every other night [both laugh]. They don't get that you can meet one person and be monogamous to them your whole life. I don't struggle every day with an attraction towards women. I also don't struggle every day with the attraction towards men, because I'm with the person that I was meant to be with. So I may think some woman is beautiful or some man is beautiful, but my bisexuality doesn't play itself out in a way that needs to be acted upon or that is something that needs to be held back.

I think I love you.

[Laughs] But that's just me. You know what I mean? If you want to say I'm bisexual, I'm so comfortable with that. I've said it in newspapers before, but I also want to qualify it and say I honor everyone's differences, so someone else's bisexuality may be completely different, but mine doesn't mean that there is any struggle involved in it or questioning in it. It is just the way it played itself out, and it certainly could have gone the other way. It's just the way it is.

So when I talk about the gay community—and I know it gets confusing for people, because I do speak a lot about gay and lesbian rights—but when I talk about the gay community and I say "us," which sometimes shakes people up... like, Wait a minute! [both laugh]. But when I talk about "us," I feel like a part of the feminist community, I feel like I am part of the woman's community, I feel like a part of the gay and lesbian community. I feel like a person who is on the side for right and just.

Now I think who anybody sleeps with doesn't really matter. I'm also for civil liberties, and I'm not a black woman. You know what I mean? But I'm for racial equality and racial respect, but some people would consider me white. So to me it doesn't matter how you live your choices in your daily life, but rather how you spend your active time. And to me I spend my active political time fighting and trying to help in any little or big way I can—for respect, tolerance, love, and equality.

Don't most of us? Most of the people I know, if you say to them, "Would you rather live in a world with respect and love and equality?" they would say yes. A lot of people just don't know how to be active.

Someone else's bisexuality may be completely different, but mine doesn't mean that there is any struggle involved in it or questioning in it. It is just the way it played itself out, and it certainly could have gone the other way.

So how do we be active?

Well, that's a good question. I say it usually depends on the person who asks me. For example, Project Angel Food is an organization that not only provides nutrition and diet and medical counseling, but delivers food to HIV-positive people every day. Food and companionship. So I say there's one place to start. For one hour a week, you can deliver lunches to people who are HIV positive. If you only do that, that's fantastic.

I say to people who care about animals, you can stop eating meat or you can just stop wearing fur. Just to stop wearing fur is a little more than you did yesterday, and it's just enough. Or stop hunting.

I say if you are at all conscious, you don't want to make a gay joke that's not funny and that's going to offend somebody. Think

before you speak about gay people as if you were one.

And then you can give thousands of dollars and you can speak. You can join the gay and lesbian center and work at any AIDS hospice in town. I mean there are so many things, but I think people get overwhelmed, and they think they need a lot of money or time or smarts. You really don't need any of it.

Just one thing.

Just that one thing. It changes your life. Start to recycle. Put a recycle bin in your house.

Here's another thing that's so interesting to me—people feel like unless they are one hundred percent involved and committed, they aren't doing it right. "Well, I didn't recycle all the paper. I just recycled the cans." Well, guess what? You recycled the cans. "I didn't stop eating chicken, but I stopped wearing leather shoes." Well, guess what? The other things you do do not cancel out the helpful things you do.

It's a psychological thing. People get wrapped up in "If I become an AIDS activist, it's 47 hours a week." You could do one hour, and that's helpful.

So, that would be my message: Don't be so hard on yourself. Do one little thing you can do and that is enough.

Thank you. Before you go, can you tell me a little about your husband?

My husband's name is Dan Finnerty, and he's a big rock-and-roll star here in L.A. He has a group here called the Dan Band that performs at a 500-seat club every weekend. And he just started touring. He went to San Francisco and sold out and to Anaheim, and he's going to Vegas and New York. He's really funny. He's a great rock singer, but he only sings songs by women. It's really cool, and he's got his own sitcom from it. He's working on an HBO special. Yeah, momma's gonna get to take a break.

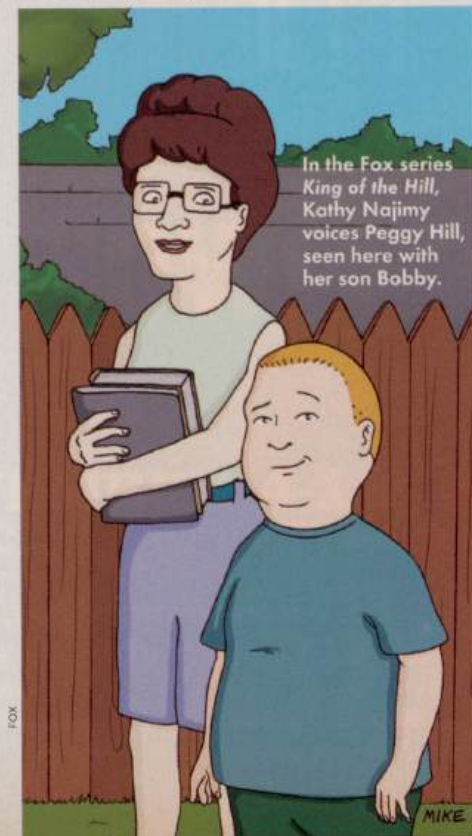
[Laughs] But first you're coming to Houston.

Yeah, and I'll meet you in Houston.

Thank you so much for your time.
My pleasure, Blase.

Blase DiStefano, creative director of this magazine, interviewed Tammy Faye Messner for the September issue.

For Black Tie info:
www.houstonblacktiedinner.org
or call John Parker at 713/868-5994.
For more Kathy: www.kathynajimy.com.



Gay Men Have Wonderful Relationships (if they know how)

Loving well brings the things we want most: comfort, companionship, fun, happiness, honesty, kindness, loyalty, mutual respect, satisfaction, security, sensuality, sexual fulfillment, understanding, warmth. These workshops will help you have these things.

Finding the Right Partner, A workshop for single gay men

This workshop is designed to teach single gay men to have more successful, lasting, love relationships, and to help them avoid repeating old mistakes. It is also helpful to men who are beginning to date again.

This workshop is intended to help you:

- Improve your dating skills
- Find and be attracted to better partners
- Stop wasting time in poor relationships
- See the real person you are dating
- Predict the course of a new relationship
- Discover and overcome the things that have kept you from having the wonderful man you want
- Put your previous experiences behind you so you can have the love you want

Loving and Being Loved Well, A workshop for gay couples

This workshop is excellent for enriching established relationships, for new couples who want to ensure the success of their relationships, and for couples who are considering breaking up.

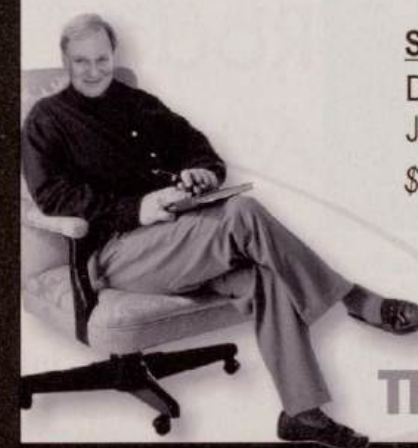
This workshop is designed to:

- Improve communication skills
- Show you the progression of love relationships
- Teach skills for increasing happiness
- Increase compassion for both partners
- Increase or preserve romance in the relationship
- Overcome the recurring hot spots
- Help you predict troublesome issues so you can take the sting out when they come
- Learn to transform blame and frustration

Register for one of these weekend workshops which have helped thousands of gay men find and keep what they want in relationships. Although you will not be pressed into unpleasant or excessive self-disclosure, you will have the fun of meeting others who are taking positive steps toward attaining their dreams of loving and being loved. You'll be served lunch on Saturday and wine and cheese following the Sunday session.

Psychotherapist, **Tony Carroll, LMSW-ACP**, is a pioneer in the area of gay male relationships beginning in 1980 with the first English language study of gay couples through today when he has helped thousands of gay men find and maintain happy, loving relationships. These are serious and in-depth workshops, but Tony's warm, lighted-hearted style makes it easy to understand and apply the serious, proven concepts that will help you along your journey toward loving and being loved the way you want. Participants are offered the unique experience of seeing and hearing from both members of a real gay couple as Tony is joined in the workshops by his life partner, Dr. Bruce Smith.

All workshops are Saturday 10:00 am - 5:00 pm and Sunday 12:30 pm - 5:00 pm. Singles workshops are \$155 per person or \$290 if you bring a friend. Couples workshops are \$290. As space is limited, a deposit and reservations are required.



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HOLY CONTEMPLATION

Why are right-wingers so spooked by same-sex marriage?

As I write this, the Hebrew calendar tells me we're in the middle of Sukkoth (pronounced *Sue COAT*). Even though Sukkoth is also known as The Festival of Booths, this holiday has nothing to do with John Wilkes or Shirley. According to sacred texts, one week after the High Holy Days of Rosh Hashana and Yom Kippur, Jews are instructed to build roofless, open-air booths outdoors and hang out there all week pondering the greatness of the universe. Sukkoth may very well prove the biblical origins of other booth-based phenomena such as Burning Man, and drive-thru espresso.

A Sukkoth booth, called a Sukkah (rhymes with *hookah*), is a simple structure made of sticks and boughs. Jews around the world add their own cultural variations for decorating the Sukkah. In desert regions they use fronds from the date palm, in Spain

they use olive branches, in the Northwest where I live we use blue tarps.

We sit inside the Sukkah and reflect on our ancestors' departure from slavery in Egypt and how they had no place to live while

Why should anyone care who chooses to spend the rest of their life arguing over which way to load the dishwasher?

they wandered in the desert. They pieced together makeshift structures with whatever they could devise, which is how duct tape was invented.

Inclusiveness and diversity are the big themes of the holiday. We're supposed to welcome the stranger, because we were once strangers in a strange land. The idea is to sit in our Sukkah and think about freedom

and faith and life's great mysteries, such as our purpose here on Earth—beyond opening doors for cats. We contemplate the impermanence of our dwellings, the eternal nature of the source of life, and why this holiday doesn't take place before the rainy season.

My unlawfully wedded wife and I made a lovely Sukkah and decorated it with corn stalks from our garden. Last night we sat there under the stars and prayed for acceptance and respect for all beings while migrating snails left slime trails on our socks.

Meanwhile, apparently to honor this holiday of extending a welcome to strangers, a coalition of 22 right-wing and religious fundamentalist groups declared October 12–18 "Marriage Protection Week: A Week Dedicated to Preserving the Sacred Institution of Marriage." This coalition's way of celebrating inclusiveness for all beings is

to codify the prohibition on same-sex marriage. Their big push is amending the U.S. Constitution to say that marriage in the United States shall consist only of the union of a man and a woman.

It's silly. Most of them are old enough to remember Bob Dylan telling us that the times they are a-changin'. Can't they get on-board with the marriage equality Zeitgeist? It doesn't seem to be hurting the Netherlands or Belgium or British Columbia or Ontario (that's Ontario, Canada, lest you thought the southern California airport city was miraculously ahead of its time).

How is heterosexual wedlock threatened by welcoming gay and lesbian couples into the institution of marriage? Why should anyone care who chooses to spend the rest of their life arguing over which way to load the dishwasher? Why should only opposite-sex couples be entitled to unite in holy matrimony? That's a right everyone should have—if they so choose and if they are blessed to find a partner

who doesn't mind the way they stack cereal bowls.

Sukkoth tradition teaches us to strive for godliness, to dedicate our every effort to increasing compassion and bringing peace. At a time when war and suffering plague the world, we shouldn't squander our limited attention spans on this stupid "Marriage Protection" smoke screen.

It's so much more productive to bundle up, experience the elements, ponder the cosmic one-ness of it all, and connect with friends and strangers. When everyone comes back inside, we log on to www.hrc.org/millionformarriage and sign the petition to support equal marriage rights. And then change our socks.

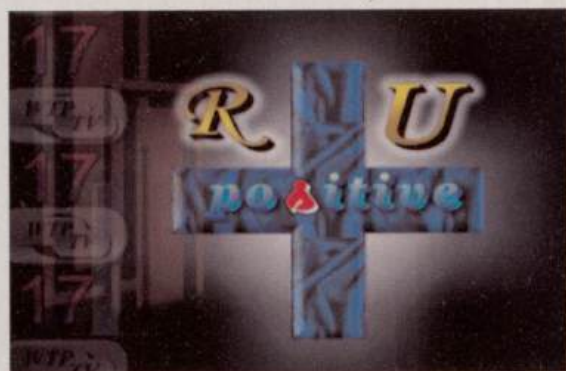


Sally Sheklow lives in Oregon with her partner of 16 years and would like their marriage legally recognized already.

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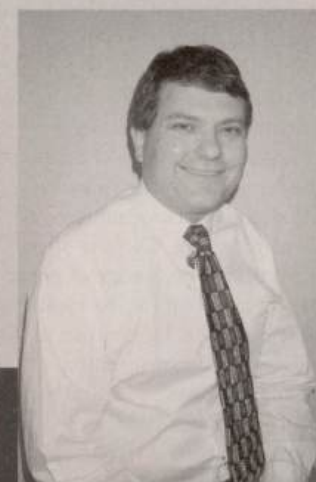
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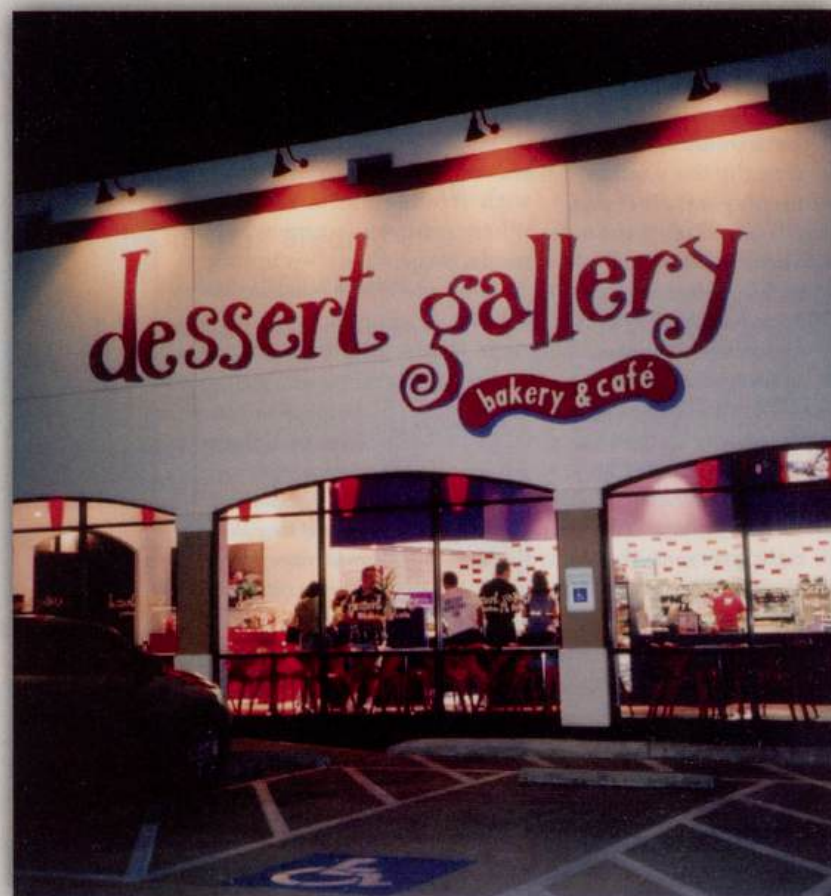
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DineOut

by Tim Brookover

SWEETS GO WEST

Dessert Gallery stakes a claim in the Galleria area



Sweet and dark: The new Dessert Gallery stays open late on weekends.

For as many years as any of us can remember, Sara Brooks's Dessert Gallery has won her category in OutSmart's Gayest & Greatest reader survey. She deserves the best-desserts accolades. From her emporium tucked at the rear of a commercial building (3200 Kirby Dr., 713/522-9999), Brooks and staff have long turned out scrumptious cakes, cookies, and other sweets. Now she has opened a second Dessert Gallery Bakery & Café in the swank Galleria-area district.

On first glance, the location—wedged between a James Coney Island (80 years of dogs in 2003!) and a Mama Ninfa's—might not seem so tony. But the spot (1616 Post Oak Blvd., 713/622-0007) does lie just up the road from the Galleria and other mercantile destinations. Think of Dessert Gallery as a calming retreat during the coming frenzy of holiday shopping.

A recent visit reminded me that Brooks offers a menu of salads and sandwiches. And who can resist the Seussically named Ham I Am? Still, the desserts remain the stars. The carrot cake, studded with pineapple chunks and nuts, is the best you will find. The lemon vacherin, a sweet meringue filled with citrusy mousse, is still a decadent pleasure. The per-slice price may jar (\$5.25 for a wedge of pecan pie?), but no one can dispute the quality.

As a cookie monster, I gravitate to the little treats. Lemon squares, white chocolate Macadamia nut, oatmeal raisin walnut, chunky peanut butter, sand tarts—who can resist? The website, www.dessertgallery.com, offers plenty more yummy ideas, including a selection of food gifts.

Tim Brookover reported on two art-related trips in the October OutSmart.

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We've moved!

Out of Town

by Victor Zorn

AUTUMN IN NEW HAMPSHIRE

Celebrate the season at the lesbian-owned Highlands Inn



Perched in the White Mountains of New Hampshire, the Highlands Inn marks 20 years in operation this year. On Thanksgiving Day every year, the 13-room, lesbian-owned guesthouse features the traditional feast—turkey with homemade stuffing, mashed potatoes, sweet potatoes, winter squash, innkeeper Grace Newman's cranberry relish, and an array of holiday desserts. The day after means turkey soup.

Particularly for Texans not accustomed to fall foliage and early snows (or any snow, for that matter), the Highlands Inn qualifies as an exotic getaway. The trees in Northern New Hampshire put on a spectacular show. For skiers, two major resorts, Bretton Woods and Cannon Mountain, are 15 minutes away. There are 15 miles of cross-country and snowshoe trails on the inn's 100 acres. Vermont—with its civil-union ceremonies—is a short drive from the inn, which offers honeymoon packages.

Most of the guests at Highlands Inn (877-LES-B-INN, 603/869-3978) are women, but men are welcome. Rates range from \$99 to \$125 per night. During November (excluding the holiday), guests who book three midweek nights will get a third at half price. Details: www.highlandsinn-nh.com.

Victor Zorn reported on Dave Kopay's Houston visit in the October OutSmart.

For all seasons: The Highlands Inn in the New Hampshire mountains offers spectacular fall foliage (below) followed by plenty of snow (above). The guesthouse celebrates 20 years in business this year.



GETTING THERE

The Highlands Inn is located in Bethlehem, New Hampshire, two miles east of Interstate 93N. Continental Airlines serves the nearest airport, in Manchester. Boston's Logan Airport is about a 2 1/2-hour drive from the inn.

BOTH PHOTOS: HIGHLANDS INN

Han-Net

continued from page 16

so I am rather attuned to exactly how a process functions. And it occurred to me that the Houston GLBT community had a very slow process in place for communicating across the city, which is not a reflection on the people involved, just the tools they had to work with at the time.

I was playing with the idea of a community-wide e-mail list when Matthew Shepherd was murdered. That gave me the motivation to get one started, and quickly.

Did you have a model?

FEM-NET was already in operation by activist Deborah Bell. I joined that list and began to think more of a Houston-wide GLBT list. Deborah introduced me to a number of web-tech friends, and together we shared ideas and plans.

Describe some of the ways Han-Net grew and evolved.

Han-Net started out as a list of local announcements. I was naïve enough to think it might just be an emergency warning-type of network, connecting our community during times when we really needed to communicate quickly. But inevitably, with the stage now provided, members of the list began to use the list for their own personal agendas. I am not making a value judgment about that, just sort of expressing what I saw happen.

I think we were all startled when Katrina Rose and Dale Carpenter were put into immediate contact with each other, as a willing audience watched. Their catfights within the first three months of Han-Net seemed to set the stage for what would follow.

Probably other moderators would have stepped in at this point and dictated what the list should do. But as a journalism graduate, I found myself too fascinated with what I was reading. The tone

did get sharp, almost libelous at times. But it was hard not to look and read, because what used to take place out of sight of the greater community was now being blasted across the community.

What was the high point for Han-Net? The low point?

The high point was Mitchell Katine's personal reports on the progress of the *Lawrence vs. Texas* case, right from the very beginning. Looking back now, it seems even more so, because the depth of the impact of the *Lawrence* case is now beginning to become obvious. I had thought this case might be a groundbreaking one for gay men. I had no idea it would literally re-define gay people within America.

The lowest point was probably when a member attacked the clerk of the City Council on Han-Net. She had tried to silence him during an outburst in City Council where he was sounding off as a citizen. In anger, he turned on her, and peppered the list with words and phrases that most of us hope we never get exposed to again.

What aspect of Han-Net are you most proud of?

I am proud that Han-Net gave support to the whole concept of electronic communication via the web. The web alone has revolutionized our lives.

Han-Net's greatest accomplishment is that GCAM, our local GLBT museum and archive, was born on the list. That alone makes the whole Han-Net experience incredibly rewarding.

Why did you decide to discontinue Han-Net?

It just seemed right. Han-Net spanned the years from Shepherd to *Lawrence*, and included the ushering in of a new millennium. As a community, we came a long way in those five years.

In the post-*Lawrence* world, we need new ideas as a

community. And we need new leaders with those new ideas for our new times. I believe that the energy that was concentrated on Han-Net is going to move to another source. Exactly where, time will tell. But we have a lot of smart activists, and I believe they will individually and collectively work to stay informed and united.

I hope that Han-Net will be remembered with fondness. For me, it will always represent a time of new ideas and excitement and challenges. And it will also remind me that we are all so amazingly similar at the core, and we are all so amazingly human.

When did you reach that decision?

Fall of 2002. The tone on the network had just gotten to the gutter level, and I decided that it was an endless battle to keep it from happening. When Han-Net began, I hoped it would be an online salon (as in

Gertrude Stein). Instead, it seems that it became an online saloon (as in *Gunsmoke*).

Is there a plan for a successor list?

HQ Activists looked like a likely successor list. Now LoneStarActivists has been started, and Deborah Rogers has asked that HQ members subscribe to this list.

What will happen to the Han-Net records?

GCAM [Gulf Coast Archive & Museum of GLBT History] will take ownership on 11/01/03 at midnight.

The Houston GLBT Community Center (3400 Montrose, Ste. 207) will host a reception to honor Han-Net on Friday, November 21, 7-9 p.m.

WEB EXTRA

Read an expanded interview at www.outsmartmagazine.com.

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Calendar of Events

Deadline for OutSmart's December issue is 5 p.m., Tuesday, November 11.

NOVEMBER

Daily (Mon.-Fri.)

HIV Testing. HCHD Thomas Street Clinic is offering HIV testing free to the public, 9 am-1 pm. There is no need to establish eligibility ("gold-card"), no donation will be asked of the person seeking testing, and the test is free. Thomas Street Clinic, 2015 Thomas, 713/873-4157 or 713/873-4026.

Daily (Mon.-Sat.)

HIV Testing. The Montrose Clinic offers free confidential HIV testing at these locations. **Monday:** Bricks, 617 Fairview, 4-8 pm; O, 710 Pacific, 9 pm-1 am. **Tuesday:** The 611, 611 Hyde Park, 4-8 pm; Club Houston, 2205 Fannin, 8 pm-midnight. **Wednesday:** Mary's, 1100 Westheimer, 4-8 pm; Ripcord, 715 Fairview, 9 pm-1 am; E's, 2517 Ralph, 10 pm-1 am; Midtowne Spa, 3100 Fannin, 10 pm-1 am. **Thursday:** All-Star News, 3415 Katy Frwy, 4-8 pm; BRB, 2400 Brazos, 8 pm-midnight; Cousins, 817 Fairview, 8 pm-midnight. **Friday:** E's, 2517 Ralph, 10 pm-1 am; Midtowne Spa, 3100 Fannin, 10 pm-1 am; The Meatrack, 2915 San Jacinto, 10 pm-2 am; Rich's, 2401 San Jacinto, 10 pm-1 am. The clinic offers classes for those newly diagnosed with HIV or Hepatitis C. For more info: 713/830-3000.

8 (Sat.)

Health Fair over the Rainbow. The LHI Rainbow Health Fair, in collaboration with the Montrose Clinic, offers free mammograms, blood sugar checks, total cholesterol testing, blood pressure

checks and a forum on risky intimate behavior (11:30 am). At the low price of \$0, you'll promote health in your body and wallet. 10 am-3 pm at 215 Westheimer. To schedule mammograms, call 713/603-0023 or e-mail at lh@lhihouston.org. For Pap tests, call 713/830-3000.

8 (Sat.)

Go Girl. The 2003 GoGirlsMusicFest hits the Rhythm Room with a bevy of indie female rockers, including Patrice Pike, Elizabeth White, Gina Young and James/Reese Project. Proceeds from this fourth annual music fest benefit the scholarship program for the Rock 'n' Roll Camp for Girls in Portland, Oregon. Other than this being a raucous occasion, why should you go? "Cuz chicks rock!" 9 pm at the Rhythm Room, 1815 Washington. For more information, visit www.gogirlsrock.com or www.gogirlsmusicfest.com.

8 (Sat.)

Dance the Night Away. Galveston's Grand 1894 Opera House presents the Bruce Wood Dance Company, with a repertoire of over 40 original ballets including Bach's *Concerto for Four Pianos*, Tchaikovsky's *Piano Concerto No. 3*, and Stravinsky's *Rite of Spring*. Noted for his haughty and sexy choreography, Wood and his 12 other dancers promise a lively spectacle. \$18.50-\$63. 8 pm at 2020 Postoffice St. For tickets and/or more info: 409/765-1894, 800/821-1894 or www.thegrand.com.

8... (Sat.)

World of Opera. Enjoy world-class opera from home. Houston Grand Opera's Fall 2003 broadcasts on National Public Radio continue every Saturday on the program World of Opera. Nov. 8 features *Lucia di Lammermoor*, Nov. 15 is *La Boheme*, Nov. 22 focuses on *The Merry Widow* and Nov. 29 closes the program with *Così fan Tutte*. 12:30 pm Saturdays on NPR, KUHF 88.7 FM. For more information, log on to www.npr.org/programs.

9 (Sun.)

Centennial Sunday at Galveston's Grand 1894 Opera House features singer/songwriter/storyteller/actor Don Sanders and his tales of the Old West in *Sourdough Cowboy* and *Tales of the West*. History comes alive as the incredible stories of Texan cowboys are retold, punctuated by authentic cowboy songs, guitar, harmonica, banjo, and old western humor. \$12. 2 pm at 2020 Postoffice St. For tickets and/or more info: 409/765-1894, 800/821-1894 or www.thegrand.com.

10 (Mon.)

The Power of Poesy. One of the most highly regarded literary programs in the country, Inprint brings two accomplished writers to the Alley to read from their latest works. Galway Kinnell and Sharon Olds (both creative writing professors at New York University) read their sometimes candid, sometimes erotic, award and Pulitzer Prize-winning

INFO NEEDED FOR YOUR EVENT LISTING: a few lines of info about your event; date/time; cost; location/address; organization name; AND two phone numbers—one for OutSmart to reach you for questions and one for OutSmart readers to get more info on your event. **Mail info to:** OutSmart Magazine, 3406 Audubon Place, Houston 77006. **Fax info to:** 713/522-3275. **E-mail info to:** calendar@outsmartmagazine.com. **NO LISTINGS CAN BE ACCEPTED AFTER THE DEADLINE DATE—TUE., NOV. 11.**

poetry. \$5 (free for students and seniors). 7:30 pm (doors open at 6:45 pm) at the Alley Theatre, 615 Texas Ave. For tickets and/or more information: 713/521-2026 or www.inprint-inc.org.

12 (Wed.)

Linda Ronstadt visits the (Blue) Bayou City. The prolific Grammy Award-winning singer spans almost as many styles of music as the number of years she's been on the charts. Pop, big band, new wave, country, traditional Mexican rhythms, and beyond, she's sung it. This time, the Houston Symphony accompanies her. 8 pm at Jones Hall. For tickets and/or more information: 713/224-7575 or www.houstonsymphony.org.

13 (Thu.)

HardCORE. CORE Performance Company, the professional dance company within Several Dancers Core, a contemporary dance organization, presents a new site-specific multimedia dance performance at the Museum of Fine Arts, Houston based on the exhibit

The Heroic Century, a collection of art drawn from New York's Museum of Modern Art. 6 pm at the Museum of Fine Arts, Houston, 1001 Bissonnet. For information: 713/862-5530 or www.severaldancerscore.org.

14 & 15 (Fri. & Sat.)

Let's Get Seussical. Kids and cats in hats of every age are sure to let out a hoot or two and be left without speech like a star-bellied sneech when this amalgam of Seuss stories unfolds. Musical numbers include as many styles as the story includes beloved characters. Whatever you do, don't be a grinch and sit silently through the "Green Eggs and Ham" song. \$18.50-\$72. 7 pm at Galveston's Grand 1894 Opera House, 2020 Postoffice St. For tickets and/or more info: 409/765-1894, 800/821-1894 or www.thegrand.com.

15 (Sat.)

Proud as a Peacock. Project Row Houses' Eldorado Ballroom Series reunites many of Houston's surviving alumni from the famed Duke-Peacock Records enterprise (1949-1973), the world's most significant African-American-owned and -operated record company of the '50s and early '60s. This all-star roster of musicians makes for a fantastic night of music. 8 pm at Eldorado Ballroom, 2310 Dowling @ Elgin. For more information: 713/526-7662.

15 & 18 (Sat. & Tue.)

Mercury Baroque Ensemble has moved to Hobby Center's Zilkha Hall but offers community concerts separate from its subscription series. Performances are held at the University of Houston, Clear Lake campus and the Foundation of the Arts and Community Enrichment in Cypress Creek. For information: 713/315-2525 or www.MercuryBaroqueEnsemble.org.

16 (Sun.)

Music of Today. The Foundation for Modern Music presents some of the world's most outstanding modern classical compositions performed by some of the world's best musicians, including a world premiere of *Zeal*, a composition from the foundation's artistic director Robert Avalon and the Houston premiere of

Tania Leon's *Oh Yemanjá*. 5 pm at First Cumberland Presbyterian Church, 2119 Avalon Place. For tickets: 713/529-3928 or modernmusic@sbglobal.net or Joel's Classical Shop, 4010 Bissonnet, 713/665-0954.

16 (Sun.)

Nova Scotia, the next installment of the Grand 1894 Opera House's Grand Excursion program, features outdoorsman/cinematographer Ken Creed. Various facets of the Eastern Canadian province in the Atlantic Maritimes are discussed, from friendliness of the people to the spectacular scenery to the quaintness of its fishing villages. \$12. 2 pm at 2020 Postoffice. Tickets: 409/765-1894, 800/821-1894 or www.thegrand.com.

CHEAP HOOTCH, CHEAPER LAUGHS

The speak-easy is the only all comedy showcase/open mic in the Montrose. Like the original speakeasies, founder/host Eric Dieckman (pictured) is shaping this up into a raw, artful alternative to standard nightclubs.



The grand opening—with straight and GLBT stand-up, the all-female comedy troupe Jane X, Prohibition Era jazz, and Argentine cocktails—is more event than show. **Wednesday, November 19, 8:30 pm**, sign-up at 8 pm at Helios, upstairs (to the right of the main entrance), 411 Westheimer at Taft. Free.

19 & 20 (Wed. & Thu.)

Classics a Go-Go. OrchestraX always finds a way to put a unique spin on classical music. John Axelrod conducts Gershwin's original jazz band version of *Rhapsody in Blue*, Ellington's *Night Creature*, Daugherty's *Dead Elvis*, and others. Shouldn't *Dead Elvis* be all the selling point a person could ask for? 7:30 pm at the Metropolitan Ballroom, 1801 Main @ Jefferson (Penthouse floor). For tickets and information: 713/225-6729 or www.orchestrax.org.

21 (Fri.)

Fiddlin' Around. Led by Lenny Solomon, three-time winner of the "Violinist of the Year" award, Bowfire assembles 10 critically acclaimed violinists and fiddlers playing an eclectic variety of music—classical, jazz, bluegrass, gypsy, Celtic, and others. 7 pm at Hobby Center's Sarofim Hall. For tickets and information: 713/227-4772 or www.spahouston.org.

21 & 22 (Fri. & Sat.)

The Music Man. As American a classic as a BLT, this musical gave us songs like "Seventy-Six Trombones," "Gary, Indiana" and "Til There Was You." Con-artist turned conductor Harold Hill schemes to sell band instruments by convincing River City, Iowa, that he can teach their children to play in a marching band. Before he can skip town—prior to the instruments' arrival—he falls in love with the town librarian and decides to go legit. Yet again, a librarian saves an entire town armed solely with her feminine wiles. 8 pm with a 3 pm Saturday matinee at Galveston's Grand 1894 Opera House, 2020 Postoffice St. For tickets and/or info: 409/765-1894, 800/821-1894 or www.thegrand.com.

23 (Sun.)

Fall Fieldwork Showcase. Several Dancers Core and the Houston Community College Central Dance Department, in conjunction with The Field (a NY-based artist service organization), presents this showcase, a culmination of 10 weeks of work from local artists. Works-in-progress are open to discussion afterward. \$5 available at the door. 7 pm in

Studio A at 3517 Austin, HCC central campus. For info: 713/862-5530 or www.severaldancerscore.org.

26 (Wed.)

Pansy Division. Their Nirvana cover, "Smells Like Queer Spirit," is hysterical, honest and kickin'. With their first release in five years, *Total Entertainment* (Alternative Tentacles), rock's first all-gay rock band returns with 15 new songs. The queer punks mix humor, bawdy mischief, and personal politics in ways that resonate at universal levels. \$10. Upstairs at Fitzgerald's, 2706 White Oak. For tickets or information: 713/862-3838 or www.fitzlive.com.

26-30 (Wed.-Sun.)

Frozen Jungle. Like a banana daiquiri, *Jungle Adventures on Ice* offers the excitement of the rainforest in a cool, refreshing format. Disney's combination of *Jungle Book*, *Tarzan*, and *The Lion King* is performed entirely on ice skates. Fluid movements of skater/performers blend

JINGLE JANGLE

Timothy Newman (c), with Katie Nelson and Brenda Kuciemba, stars in *Uh Oh, Here Comes Christmas through November 29* at Theatre Suburbia. Elvin Moriarty and Judy Reeves co-direct this sardonic romp with music written by Ernest Zulia and David Caldwell based on essays by Robert Fulghum (*All I Really Need to Know I Learned in Kindergarten*).



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with all your favorite songs from these popular stories. Somehow, "Can You Feel the Love Tonight" seems like it was made for ice-choreography. Additionally, there's a Spanish performance on Nov. 30. \$12-\$50. Showtimes vary. At Compaq Center. For tickets and information: 713/629-3700 or www.disneyonice.com.

28 (Fri.)

AIDS Coalition of Texas Now! (ACT Now!) is a statewide volunteer coalition of individuals infected or affected by HIV/AIDS that serves to advocate on all related matters such as legislation, appropriations, education, prevention, and treatment. Anyone touched by the disease is encouraged to participate in their meetings. 2 pm at Thomas Street Clinic, 3rd floor conference room. For information: 713/528-4514.

PLANNING AHEAD

DECEMBER

December 1 (Mon.)

The Illumination Project. December 1 is World AIDS Day. The second annual *Illumination Project*, presented by Dominic Walsh Dance Theater and Hope Stone Inc., features the work of Dominic Walsh Dance Theater; Stanton Welch, Dorrell Martin's Fusion Dance, dance and performance artist Allan Tibbetts of NYC, and Hope Stone Dance and closes with a candle-lighting ceremony. Money raised is given to A Caring Safe Place (a transitional living place for men with HIV/AIDS) and the Baylor Pediatrics AIDS Initiative. \$35, \$60 for couples. 7:30 pm at DiverseWorks, 1117 East Fwy, off N. Main at Naylor. For information: 713/335-3445 or www.diverseworks.org.

December 3 (Wed.)

A Little Day Music. Pack a lunch. Da Camera of Houston's lunchtime performance series continues with a jazz concert by the Sam Dinkins III trio with guest vocalist Vickie Davis Spears. Ticket drawings for other Da Camera events are a part of this free series, such as tickets to the upcoming concert by Brazilian vocalist Luciana Souza. If you miss this month's free performance, ya gotta wait another month. The series touches down the first Wednesday of the month through May. Noon in the Grand Foyer of the Wortham Center, Texas at Smith. For information: 713/524-7601 or www.dacamera.com.

December 3-9

The Laramie Project will be staged at the High School for the Performing and Visual Arts on December 3 & 4 at 6 pm; December 5 & 6 at 7:30 pm; December 6 at

2 pm; and December 8 & 9 at 6 pm. Tickets are \$6 for the 6 pm shows and \$7.50 for the 7 pm shows.

December 5 (Fri.)

Portrait of Jason. Met with a wave of controversy in the U.S., this documentary about Jason Holliday, a gay African-American hustler in the late '60s, was well received in Europe, winning prizes at festivals and high praise from Ingmar Bergman ("The most fascinating film I've ever seen"). The articulate, humorous, self-aware Holliday desperately seeks the viewer's approval as he reveals his life on the street, telling XS with wit and style his harrowing tales of sordid experiences. \$6. 7 pm at the Museum of Fine Arts, Houston, 1001 Bissonnet. For more information: 713/639-7515 or www.mfab.org/films.

December 5 (Fri.)

Brazilian jazz vocalist Luciana Souza and her quartet play Houston with jazz and bossa nova standards and original work. Two of her recordings made the *New York Times* list of top 10 jazz CDs this year. *Down Beat* magazine praises her "refined, fluid voice" and her ability "to get to the core of a melody." \$25-\$40. 8 pm at the Cullen Theater, 500 Texas at Smith. For information: 713/524-7601 or www.dacamera.com.

December 7 (Sun.)

A Southwest Christmas. A Christmas Songfest, a nonprofit organization, hosts this evening of Yuletide festivities galore to raise funds for groups that benefit those with HIV/AIDS. A buffet dinner and open bar serve as prelude to the holiday song sing-along competition and auction. 5 pm at the Homberger Conference Center. For information: 713/417-5345.

December 7 (Sun.)

Dies Natalis. Soprano Dawn Monachino performs Gerald Finzi's *Dies Natalis* with string ensemble, followed by the evening service of Compline with the Men of Trinity Choir. 7 pm. For information: 713/528-4100, x17.

December 8, 12, & 14 (Mon., Fri., Sun.)

Hark, the Herald, Gay Men Sing. The Gay Men's Chorus of Houston ushers in the holiday season with *Silver Bells—Holidays in the City*. "Do You Hear What I Hear?" the mirthful new work "Forgotten Carols from Other Lands," and Mariah Carey's "All I Want for Christmas Is You!" highlight the songlist. To top it all off, Santa's Workshop opens up for a visit with a special singing appearance of Mrs. Claus. 8 pm on Monday & Friday, 3 pm on Sunday. Tickets: 713/521-7464 or tickets@gmch.org or www.gmch.org/tickets.

PERFORMING ARTS

◆ **A Christmas Carol.** It's time for the Alley's holiday tradition, a version of Charles Dickens's Christmas classic so spectacular, it's practically cinematic. Spanish translation shows on December 7, pay-what-you-can shows on December 28 and 29, \$37-\$54. November 28-December 28 at The Alley, 615 Texas Ave. For tickets and/or more information: 713/228-8421 or www.alleytheatre.org.

◆ **Doc Moore and More.** The comically unintelligible Doc Moore from Dumpster, Texas, emcees this evening of music, comedy, sketch, and improv. If you haven't seen Radio Music Theatre's Rich Mills, Vicki Farrell, and Steve Farrell switch back and forth flawlessly among countless characters, you're missing out on some amazing comic talent. \$18. Through November 22 @ Radio Music Theatre, 2623 Colquitt. For tickets: 713/522-7722.

◆ **Faust.** Johann Wolfgang von Goethe's German poem comes alive in this French-composed opera. Temptation, damnation, and redemption are the central themes in this dramatic whirlwind of a story. Native Texan Jason Lester plays Mephistopheles, Paul Mueller and John Tiranno play Faust. \$20-\$30. November 13-22 @ Lambert Hall, 1703 Heights Blvd. For tickets: 713/861-5303 or www.operaintheheights.org.

◆ **The Full Monty.** Just where did that phrase come from? Some say it traces back to field marshal Bernard "Monty" Montgomery, who did everything to the fullest. Maybe it refers to the Spanish-American card game monte or America's three-card version. Or maybe British tailor Montague Brown, who outfitted demobilized soldiers with a three-piece suit—the full monty—for civilian life. Whatever the etymology of this phrase may be, the Broadway version of this popular film keeps its uniquely English title despite the re-setting of the story in Buffalo, New York. \$25-\$66. November 4-16 @ the Hobby Center. For tickets, call Ticketmaster 713-629-3700 or www.ticketmaster.com. ◆ **Fully Committed.** A play about restaurant culture for the fattest city in the country with the most restaurants in the country. It just makes sense. This off-Broadway comedy hit follows a day in the life of an out-of-work actor who answers the fiery reservation line at Mahattan's number-one eatery. Caller after caller stops at nothing—bribes, hysterics, threats—to get a reservation or a good table. Through November 16 at

CRAWFORD IN THE CRISPER

If you're thinking about a trip for the holidays, this may be your ticket. Theatre Rhinoceros in chilly San Fran presents *Christmas with the Crawfords*, a musical comedy about Joan Crawford. • This historical satire finds Miss Crawford in her Brentwood mansion, Christmas Eve, 1944. Her career has taken a downturn. MGM has just let her go. Warner Bros. has reluctantly offered her a role in the film noir story *Mildred Pierce*. Her friend Hedda Hopper hosts a radio broadcast with Joan live from the Crawford estate to help keep her in the public eye. Unfortunately, one uninvited celebrity guest after another stops by, singing holiday tunes. The broadcast intended to boost Crawford's image is ruined further when her children surprise Mommie Dearest with a present that sends her keeling over the edge. • Starring NYC's drag goddess Hedda Lettuce and a gaggle of other female impersonators, this musical is a tossed salad of holiday madness. —Eric Dieckman



Hedda Lettuce

What: *Christmas with the Crawfords*

When: November 19–December 31

Where: Theatre Rhinoceros, San Francisco, 2626 16th St., 415/861-5079

The Alley Theatre. Tickets and information: 713-228-8421 or www.alleytheatre.org.

◆ **Good Boys.** Stages opens the regional premiere of "America's best-known, unknown playwright," the pseudonymous Jane Martin. The story opens with the meeting of two fathers who believe they are strangers to each other. As destiny would have it, one is the father of the boy who shot the son of the other father. Questions like, "Should parents be held responsible for the actions of their child?" and "How do we and should we forgive such actions?" are raised in this compelling play. \$20-\$35. November 5-23 @ Stages, 3201 Allen Pkwy at Waugh Dr. For tickets: 713/527-0123 or www.stages theatre.com.

◆ **James Joyce's The Dead.** A musical adaptation from Joyce's short-story collection *The Dubliners*, the story takes place at Christmastime during the Feast of the Epiphany in the Morkan home on Usher Island. Three

music teachers invite their friends to a musical party. During the party, music recalls ghosts from the past, and one woman finds the memory of her one great love competing with her husband's love in the present. \$20-\$30. Show times vary. November 1-December 7 at Main Street Theater in the Rice Village, 2540 Times Blvd. For tickets or more information: 713/524-6706 or www.mainstreettheater.com.

◆ **Julius Caesar.** Handel's rendition of this classic tale of love, lust, and deceit is performed by the stunning cast of Laura Claycomb as Cleopatra, Brian Asawa as Ptolemy, and David Daniels (see interview on page 32) as the infamous Roman dictator. \$9 and up. Through November 16 @ Cullen Theater. For tickets: 713/228-OPERA or www.houstongrandopera.org.

◆ **Killer Karaoke and Marriage Can Be Murder.** Mystery Café serves up dinner theater with a giggle. • Killer Karaoke: Who will win this karaoke competition

of half-wits and crummy crooners? Moreover, who will survive the devious plots of the contest's mysterious serial killer? • *Marriage Can Be Murder*: Millions of dollars in the legume industry are at stake as Phil Hocker and Stephanie Belcher (the children of two warring baked-bean magnates) await their wedding day, unless somebody kills them off to get the money. • *Killer Karaoke* plays Fridays; *Marriage Can Be Murder* plays Saturdays. Both shows presented at 8 pm at Marriott West Loop, 1750 West Loop South at San Felipe. Reservations required: call 713/944-2583 or visit www.mysterycafehouston.com.

◆ **Relatively Speaking.** By Alan Ayckbourn, this story combines one country house, six boxes of chocolates, sixteen floral bouquets, one pair of bedroom slippers and a thousand hilarious misunderstandings. Through November 15 @ The Company OnStage, 536 Westbury Sq. For tickets: 713/726-1219.

◆ **Rhinoceros.** Eugene Ionesco's harrowing, tragicomic opus on alienation and conformity finds Berenger bemoaning his restless existence when a rhinoceros tears through the town, wreaking havoc. A riot amongst the townspeople ensues over the meaning of the event and why it has even happened. As the play progresses, each of Berenger's intimates chooses the way of the Rhinoceros—the unthinking crowd—leaving Berenger to himself. \$10-\$15, \$5.99 opening weekend. November 20-December 13 @ The Axiom, McKinney. For tickets and/or more information: 713/522-8443 or www.infernalbridegroom.com.

◆ **Santalaland Diaries.** The story that launched David Sedani's career as an award-winning writer tromps the boards. Best described as how a slacker might spend the holidays, the story follows a Macy's elf trapped in Christmas Hell. November 22-December 20, 5 and 8 pm at Theater LaB Houston, 1706 Alamo. For tickets and/or more information: 713/868-7516.

◆ **The Stops.** From local playwright Eric Lane Barnes, author of *Fairy Tales* and *Fruit Cocktail*, comes *The Stops*, a musical about three ladies from NALOG (the North American Ladies Organists Guild), Ginny, Rose, and Eugenia. The trio, who performs mostly contemporary Christian music abroad, finds out their mentor and arranger is gay. How gays are treated within the church is the serious issue in this otherwise campy comedy. \$20. Through December 20 @ Theatre New West, 1415 California St. For tickets: 713/522-2204.

◆ **Terra Nova.** The story of Robert Falcon Scott's ill-fated expedition to Antarctica written by Ted Talley,

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◆ **The Texas Renaissance Festival** brings together families, history buffs, theater geeks, and lovers of turkey legs and sausages on sticks for outdoor revelry. If the chivalrous men with their spirited jousting or the unwieldy cleavage prove not to rouse ye well enough, keep thine eyes bare-strip't for the occasional wandering Ren-Fest tranny. They're an elusive lot. Free for children aged 4 and under, \$10 for children 5-12, and \$21 for everyone else. Through November 16, 9 am-dusk. Six miles south of TX Hwy 105 on FM 1774 between Magnolia and Plantersville. 45 miles NW of Houston. Tickets and information: 1-800-458-3435 or www.texrenfest.com.

◆ **They Sing Christmas Up in Harlem.** The Ensemble Theatre hosts this new adaptation of Charles Dickens's *A Christmas Carol*. Set in Harlem, a gangster named Ebenezer Scrooge who terrorizes Harlem folk by day and is visited by a gospel and jazz singing spirit on Christmas Eve. Scrooge learns to love gospel, jazz, and the joy of Harlem. \$20-\$35. November 20-December 21 @ the Ensemble Theatre, 3535 Main St. For tickets: 713/520-0055.

RADIO

◆ **After Hours.** Saturdays, midnight to 3 am. Featuring the QMZ (Queer Music Zone) with Jimmy Carper. KPFT 90.1 FM, 713/526-5738.

◆ **Queer Voices.** Mondays, 8-10 pm. Features, news, music, interviews, reviews, and commentary. KPFT 90.1 FM, 713/526-4000.

ART/PHOTOGRAPHY

◆ **Eye on Third Ward: Yates High School Photography.** This 9th annual exhibit features 25 photographs by student photographers from Yates Magnet School of Communication, many of which are accompanied by creative writings that reveal how the students developed their own sense of self in the process of discovering the Third Ward community. Through December 29 @ the Museum of Fine Arts, Houston, 1001 Bissonnet. For information: 713/639-7300 or www.mfah.org.

◆ **Haze.** Rice University's Art Gallery is the only Southwest venue for Tara Donovan's installation. Her creative process begins with the close observation of mundane objects like Scotch tape, pencils, or toothpicks. These items, multiplied by millions, form the basis of her visually stunning works that recall the growth processes of the natural world. November 6-December 14 @ Rice Gallery, ground floor of Sewall Hall, off Rice University entrance 1.

◆ **The Heroic Century.** Houston is the exclusive town to exhibit 208 of the best examples of the giants of modern art, including works by Dali, Picasso, van Gogh, Lichtenstein, and Matisse. Normally, to see such an exhaustive collection you'd have to travel the globe. The MFA will even throw in some Warhol. Now how much would you pay? All the giants, one big collection, one great museum, all for under 15 bucks. \$12.50 (\$7.50 for seniors, students with valid ID, and children 6-18; \$5 for members). Through January 4 at The Museum of Fine Arts, Houston, 1001 Bissonnet. For information: 713/639-7300 or www.mfah.org.

◆ **Molas: Quilted Treasures of the Kuna Indians.** Every society strives to immortalize its heritage. For the Kuna Indians, this is done through the mola, a method of quilting that incorporates reverse appliqué technique. Often worn by the Kuna women as blouses, the vibrant panels display rich scenes of the animal and plant life of the Caribbean. *Molas* is of interest to those keen on quilting, fashion, art, and the Caribbean landscape. Through January 4 @ the Houston Museum of Natural Science, One Hermann Circle Dr. More info: 713-639-4629 or www.hmns.org.

◆ **In Pursuit of the Absolute.** Monochrome and non-objective works of greats such as Lucio Fontana, Yves Klein, Barnett Newman, and Mark Rothko are featured in this exploration of abstract art of the 20th century. The focus of these artists is on an art free from the constraints of narrative and recognizable imagery, or as the quote in Jackson Pollock's biographical film goes, "Paint is paint and surface is surface." Through February 29, 2004, @ the Menil Collection, 1515 Sul Ross. For information: 713/524-9400 or www.menil.org.

◆ **Kazimir Malevich: Suprematism.** Long celebrated as one of the founders of non-objective art in the 20th century, Malevich developed a system of abstract painting called Suprematism, pure of form with the intention of crossing cultural and ethnic boundaries. Comprised of 90 works, some have never been shown in the West. Through January 11, 2004 @ the Menil Collection, 1515 Sul Ross. For information: 713/524-9400 or www.menil.org.

◆ **Nuestra Vida de Cuadritos (Our Lives in Little Boxes)** is an exhibition of Texan Richard Rebelo's paintings, worlds divided into smaller and smaller boxes, meditations on ethnicities, cultures, nations, and borders. A graduate of the University of Houston, Rebelo's work can be found in collections in the U.S., Europe, and Australia. Through December @ the Daily Review Café, 3412 W. Lamar off Dunlavy. For more information, call 713/526-4595.

◆ **The Paper Sculpture Show** is an exceptionally unique and fun exploration of the nature of art, how it is envisioned, and how it is created. Each of the more than 30 contributing artists (including the Art Guys) lists the components of the sculpture, like a set of directions. With the help of a gallery assistant, you build the sculpture. How often do you get to go to a gallery and make the art yourself? Free. Through Nov. 15 at DiverseWorks, 1117 East Fwy off N. main at Naylor. Info: 713-223-8346 or www.diverseworks.org.

◆ **Perspectives 139: Abraham Cruzvillegas.** The first solo museum show for Mexican artist Abraham Cruzvillegas, *Perspectives 139* looks at his three-dimensional, assemblage-based work. An active and influential member of a new generation of contemporary artists in Mexico City, his curious and playful compositions of found objects include items as unrelated as feathers, seashells, photography studio props, bowling balls, and otherwise. Through January 4, 2004, @ the Contemporary Arts Museum Houston, 5216 Montrose Blvd. For information: 713/284-8250 or www.camh.org.

◆ **RISD on the Road: Jewelry** exhibits the work of alumni from the Rhode Island School of Design's jewelry and metalsmithing program. The work of these creative artisans displays a broad spectrum of vision: Sandra Enterline's representations of the cosmos in gold and silver; Noam Elyashiv's complex geometric designs in precious metal. Kiwon Wang and Rebecca Hannon's juxtaposition of precious jewels to common materials like paper and plastic. Free. November 22-January 4 in the Small Gallery @ the Houston Center for Contemporary Craft, 4848 Main St. For information: 713/529-4848 or www.craftthouston.org.

◆ **Shirin Neshat.** With her first major solo exhibition

in the U.S., Iranian-born video artist/photographer Shirin Neshat examines the woman's experience in traditional Islamic society. Her poetic style offers an unsettling aesthetic journey into a world of divided social roles between men and women. Look for the video trilogy, *Turbulent* (1998), *Rapture* (1999), and *Fervor* (2000) which explore the difficulty of being a woman in Islam and the problems it brings to sexuality and desire. Through November 30 @ the Contemporary Arts Museum Houston, 5216 Montrose Blvd. For information: 713/284-8250 or www.camh.org.

◆ **Tabletki: Russian Icons from the Menil Collection.** Home to one of the world's most significant collections of Byzantine and Medieval art, the Menil presents approximately 15 major examples of icon painting from the 13th through the 19th centuries. Among these are several "bilateral tabletki," icons painted on both front and back, which were used in processions and religious ceremony. Through January 25, 2004 @ the Menil Collection, 1515 Sul Ross. For information: 713/524-9400 or www.menil.org.

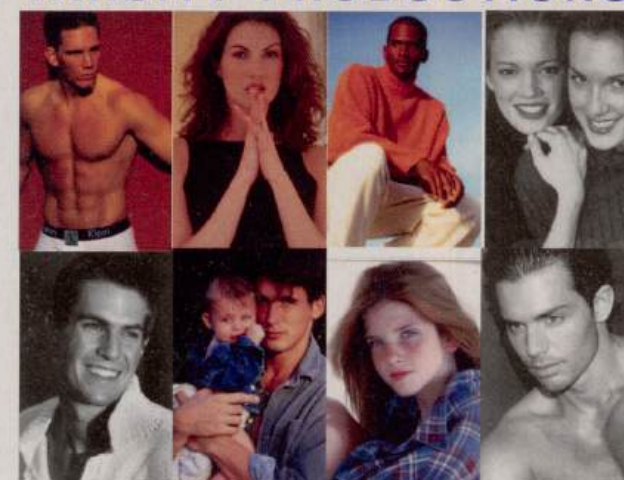
◆ **Trim.** Native Texan Andy Coolquit begins DiverseWorks's visual arts season with his exhibit, *Trim*, in conjunction with *The Paper Sculpture Show*. This notorious artist (his cool part house got him dismissed from his UT grad program) includes funky sculptural furniture, text paintings, and odd collections like a collection of found cigarette lighters. Through November 15 at DiverseWorks, 1117 East Fwy off N. main at Naylor. Info: 713-223-8346 or www.diverseworks.org.

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for OutSmart's December issue:
Tuesday, November 11, 5 p.m.

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Tree of Remembrance Lighting Ceremony
Sunday, November 30, 2003 6 p.m.

Bring an ornament in memory of a loved one lost to AIDS. The tree will stay up through December. Gulf Coast Archive & Museum of GLBT History will also present a display of ornaments made for the Tree of Remembrance in the past.

POSITIVE ART WORKSHOP EXHIBITION
DECEMBER 1 • NOON-9 P.M.

The Community Center will present photographs and other art created by artists living with HIV/AIDS who participate in the classes at the Center as well as paintings by program director Ryan Fugate.



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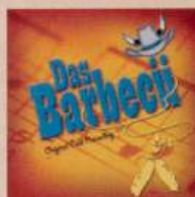
continued from
page 66

just because they didn't "work"—and many receive their premiere recordings here. From Fynsworth Alley (www.fynsworthalley.com). —TC

Original Cast Recording

Das Barbecü

Das Barbecü is a musical comedy loosely based on Richard Wagner's famous Ring Circle. The German composer's four-part, 20-hour operatic cycle has been boiled down to a two-hour package and relocated to Texas and focuses on two sets of mismatched lovers and three generations of characters from two feuding families. The music ranges from Broadway to Texas swing to jazz to country western. From Fynsworth Alley (www.fynsworthalley.com). —TC



Esteban Ramirez

Fly with Me

Tex/Mex born-and-bred pianist/composer Esteban Ramirez may have grown up in El Paso, Texas, but don't expect Tejano music from this part-Aztec/part-Mexican artist. From the very first note of *Fly with Me*, it is obvious that Ramirez is a master of the acoustic grand piano featuring compelling ensemble arrangements. From Descanso Music (www.descanso-music.com). —SL



Wilshire

New Universe

Wilshire is the singer-songwriter duo Lori Wilshire (born in Houston) and Micah Wilshire. Their melodic pop-rock sound is influenced by the Beatles, classic soul, and Top 40 pop. Both write, sing, and play guitar. Their first single "Special" is a driving track with an expansive chorus that showcases the pair's soaring harmonies. From Columbia Records (www.columbiarecords.com). —SL



Tonehenge

Tonehenge

Tonehenge, the brainchild of vocalist and cellist Mystic Pete (Peter Ludwig), boasts the vocals of Argentinean-born singer Ana Robles, who has backed Luis Miguel of recent Naked Music fame and Gloria Estefan. On certain tracks, Mystic Pete marries the Euro-techno sound with the American experience. Dawnia Carlson, lead singer on "The One," might be likened to dance divas Amber or Deborah Cox. From Sound Designs International. Info: www.tonehenge.com. —TC



Business News

Aubrey Sellers has begun carrying the Kama Sutra product line—which includes edible oils, creams, and potions as well as luxury bath products—and the new line of Motel Deluxe adult-oriented cards at his store, **Aubrey Sellers Flowers & Gifts** (314 Gray, 713/807-1919). "In addition to our many beautiful gifts and accessories, we are starting to carry more items that appeal to sensuous tastes," says Sellers, who opened his Midtown retail location in May 2002 after more than 12 years in business.

Al's Formal Wear

has again launched its annual Ultimate Tuxedo Sale with special values on men's evening clothes. The sale ends December 31. There are 29 Houston-area locations. For more info: Dial your area code, then 730-4ALS.



Al's Formal Wear tux.

Gingiss Formalwear offers special discounts on tuxedo rentals for the November 15 Houston Black Tie Dinner. The nine Houston-area locations include the Galleria 2 store (5175 Westheimer, 713/626-3318).



GOOD JEANS. On October 7, M2M Fashion owner **Michael Malik** opened his new **Jeans Couture** (5000 Westheimer, 713/626-JEAN) with the kickoff party for the DIFFA Holiday Collection Gala. The Design Industries Foundation Fighting AIDS event will take place on November 7 at the Hotel Derek. Celebrating at the kickoff (l-r): **Amy Branch, Natassha Trinh, Zoe Jackson, Michael Malik, and Aylen Malik.**

Tila's (1111 S. Shepherd, 713/522-7654) now offers a VIP membership. Diners can obtain a frequent-visit card and receive a choice of a free margarita, vodtini, or appetizer on their 10th visit. The Mexico City continental cuisine restaurant now also features Tila's Tuesday \$2 Tea, with \$2 specials on margaritas, vodtinis, and appetizers.

Business and sales coach **Mattison Grey, M.Ed.**, will present a workshop "Reality Selling: Are You Getting Everything You Want in Your Life and Career?" on November 14, 8:30 a.m.-4:30 p.m., at the Warwick. The fee is \$149. To register: 832/283-2476 or Mattison@prosperitypeople.net/.

Karpas Properties has named **George Renfro** sales manager. The real-estate firm is located at 3355 West Alabama (713/850-1777, 866/877-5230). Website: www.karpas.com.

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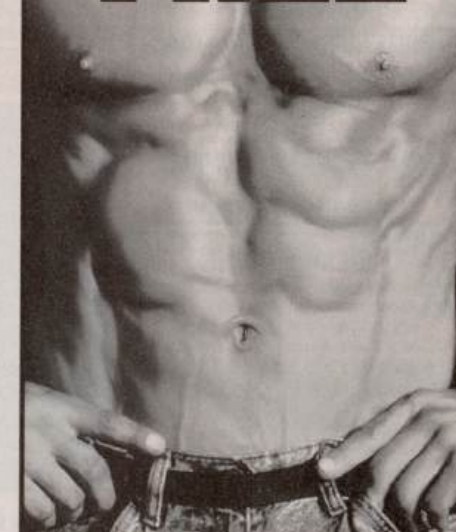
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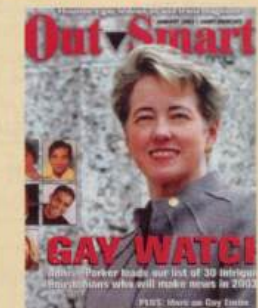
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BAR & CLUB GUIDE

HOUSTON

BOCADOS

On Wednesday nights, women pack this Mexican restaurant for dancing and socializing. Sunday brunch starts at 11 a.m. and lasts till 3 in the afternoon. 1312 West Alabama • 713/523-5230.

BRAZOS RIVER BOTTOM

The BRB, Houston's leading country-western bar, is located in Midtown, just outside Montrose. Expect to see some fast and fancy two-stepping. Great benefit shows often take place on Sunday night. 2400 Brazos • 713/528-9192.

BRIAR PATCH

One of the oldest gay nightspots in Houston, the venerable Briar Patch recently moved to a new Montrose location. Show tunes at the piano bar are the main attraction. 2312 Crocker • 713/665-9678.

BRICKS II

This neighborhood joint boasts a jukebox loaded with country music, busy pool tables, cold draft, and the occasional cowboy hat. Regulars rule at this low-key spot. 617 Fairview • 713/528-8102.

BUCHANAN'S

This club recently opened in southeast Houston near Hobby Airport. Buchanan's offers American and Latino dance music. Diana Jackson hosts Friday and Saturday night shows. 7731 Park Place • 832/754-4116.

CHANCES/THE BARN/G-SPOT

This three-in-one women's bar provides a place to two-step, rock, and sit down and talk—all under one roof. Thursday night features Kazi's Karaoke. 1100 Westheimer • 713/523-7217 • www.chancesbar.com.

CLUB BIG YO

With the motto "This is an all girls production; our male friends are welcome," this Southwest club offers special evenings including Thursday talent night. Dancers strut on Sunday. 6305 Skyline • 713/953-0268, 281/322-0394 • www.clubbigyo.com.

CLUB KALIPSO

This Spring Branch club offers hot Latin music, including cumbia, merengue, ranchera, and salsa as well as Latin and English pop. Male dancers work their stuff every Sunday night. 6806 Long Point #F • 713/688-6562.

CLUB INERGY

A nightlife institution for 12 years, this Southwest club offers an eclectic mix of Latin rhythms, mainstream dance, and hip hop. Sunday is the special show night. 5750 Chimney Rock • 713/666-7310 • www.clubinergy.com.

CLUB RAINBOW

Welcoming a mixed lesbian crowd, this bar is located on the Westheimer curve in Montrose. The Glow Girl dancers perform on Sunday, Wednesday, Thursday, and Friday nights. 1417-B Westheimer • 713/522-5166.

CLUB XCAPE

Located in South Houston, Club Xcape offers special nights including Monday Madness with MC Jenny Craig. Ghetto Fabulous Friday, featuring rap, hip-hop, and boogie music, marks the end of the week. 2612 South Richey • 713/944-7663.

COUSIN'S

Drag fans pack this club in the heart of Montrose for its campy shows on Thursdays, Fridays, Saturdays, and Sundays. 817 Fairview • 713/528-9204.

BEHIND THE BAR

WHO: Mel Kennedy
WHERE: Third Coast in Galveston (904 Avenue M, 409/765-6911)
WHAT'S UP: Celebrate Thanksgiving with Kennedy, named Best Female Bartender in Galveston in our Gayest & Greatest survey, when Third Coast dishes up the holiday feast on November 27.



THOMAS CHILLEN

DECADES

Celebrating its fourth year in business, this casual neighborhood bar packs lots of local color. Decades regularly hosts pool tournaments and benefit events. 1205 Richmond • 713/521-2224.

EJ's

Located on the western front of Montrose, EJ's retains the charm of a local colorful hangout. Nightly shows, including community benefits, pack the stage. The upstairs martini bar offers a quiet retreat. 2517 Ralph • 713/527-9071.

GUAVA LAMP

Every Thursday is Cabaret Night, featuring Jerry Atwood and Kim Yvette, at this stylish Shepherd Plaza video club. Karaoke fans show up on Wednesday and Sunday nights. 2159 Portsmouth • 713/524-3359 • www.guavalamp.com.

JR's/SANTA FE

This Montrose standard offers features from pool tables, table dancers, to karaoke. Look for Carol Gilford and George Konar, named best

bartenders in the 2002 Gayest & Greatest OutSmart reader poll. 808 Pacific • 713/521-2519.

KEYS WEST

Selected best piano bar in the Gayest & Greatest poll, this nightspot near downtown features regular performers and guest entertainers. The two-level deck provides a knockout skyline view. 817 West Dallas • 713/571-7870 • www.keyswest.com.

MANGO VIDEO LOUNGE

Located next to Club Inergy, this new Wednesday-Saturday spot has a 15-foot video screen, dance floor, and pool tables. DJ Kenny Jammz hosts karaoke night on Wednesday. 5742 Chimney Rock • 713/666-7472.

MARY'S

One of the oldest clubs in Houston, Mary's shuttered briefly this past January but reopened once purchased by Michael's Outpost owner Michael Galtz. Inside and outside bars stay busy at this legendary nightspot. 1022 Westheimer • 713/527-9669.

MELA'S

The crowd at this neighborhood spot drops by for the Tejano and country-western music, the women, and the pool tables. Owner Mela Contreras was a Pride parade grand marshal in 2002. 302 Tuam • 713/523-0747.

METEOR

The chic atmosphere at this Montrose video bar includes overstuffed couches, marble-topped bars, and stylish glassware. Attractive men and women gather here any night of the week for drinks and conversation. 2306 Genesee • 713/521-0123 • www.meteorhouston.com.

MICHAEL'S OUTPOST

Minutes from the heart of Montrose, this relaxed neighborhood bar hosts frequent pool and dart tournaments. On Wednesday, stop by for Rick's chili con queso and chips. 1419 Richmond • 713/520-8446.

MO MONG

Every Wednesday night, the guys and gals show up at this Vietnamese restaurant in droves to enjoy the martini specials. 1201 Westheimer #B • 713/524-5664.

MONTROSE MINING COMPANY

Great-looking male dancers bump and grind every night at this leather/denim spot. The two-tier back patio bar provides a perch for viewing the Pacific Street scenery. 805 Pacific • 713/529-7488.

O

Two outdoor balconies allow patrons to watch the passing parade on Pacific. A sleek interior and multiple plasma screens distinguish this spot, which stays open after hours on weekends. 710 Pacific • 713/523-0213.

PRIVÉ

The patio at this second-floor spot overlooks the lively Westheimer/Montrose intersection. The mixed crowd includes smartly dressed gays as well as non-gays. 910 Westheimer • 713/522-2542.

RAINBOW ROOM

This gathering spot north of Houston has a casual neighborhood atmosphere. The pool tables stay busy. 527 Barren Springs off Ella Boulevard • 281/872-0215.

RICH'S HOUSTON

Even after more than 20 years, the iconic two-story danceteria still draws an energetic crowd. Techno light and laser shows enhance the pumped-up music. 2401 San Jacinto • 713-759-9606 • www.richs-houston.com.

RIPCORD

OutSmart readers named this spot the best place to show off your leather in the Gayest & Greatest poll. Inside the bar, the Black Hawk Leather Shop sells treasures for the leather/levis/uniform crowd. 715 Fairview • 713/521-2792 • www.ripcordjournal.com.

611 HYDE PARK PUB

On Friday and Saturday nights, this neighborhood spot offers great buffet dinners. Features include a beautiful garden-style patio. 611 Hyde Park • 713/526-7070.

SOUTH BEACH

The techno-ethic sound system keeps shirtless boys pumped up late into the night. In the Gayest & Greatest poll, OutSmart readers named this spot the best club after 2 a.m. 810 Pacific • 713/529-SOBE (7823) • www.SouthBeachTheNightclub.com.

TOYZ

Latin house, hip-hop, salsa, and merengue flavor this Southwest Houston nightclub. Thursday is the Hot Papi Chula contest. 5322 Glenmont • 713/668-4892.

VIVIANA'S

This club near downtown appeals to fans of Latino music and drag alike. 5219 Washington • 713/862-0203.

Conroe

RANCH HILL SALOON

Located 30 miles north of Houston, this spot features daily drink specials, live entertainment, and karaoke night on Wednesday. 2111 Airport Rd. • 936/441-6426.

Galveston

BLVD SALOON

In the Gayest & Greatest poll, OutSmart readers named this spot the best island place to show off your leather. The second-floor deck has a great view of the Gulf. 3102 Seawall Blvd. • 409/750-8571 • www.blvdaloongalveston.com.

GARZA'S KON TIKI

Located downtown, the Kon Tiki is steps from the Strand. This spot was named favorite island club and best place to see male dancers in the Gayest & Greatest poll. 315 Tremont • 409/765-5805 • www.thekontiki.com.

MYRA'S CANTINA

Well-known island entertainer Myra Sanchez and her business partner Charles Peña opened this distinctly Latin neighborhood cantina. They offer beer, wine, and setups. • 813 21st (between Ball and Sealy)

ROBERT'S LAFITTE

A real neighborhood bar, this island institution attracts a colorful crowd of regulars and travelers. The club, only two blocks from the Gulf, features a private patio. 2501 Ave Q (at 25th) • 409/765-9092.

THIRD COAST

This new club has opened in the former Jimmy's on the Beach location. The wall of windows still offers a great view of the Gulf. 904 Avenue M • 409/765-6911.

Beaumont

THE COPA

The hangout for Lamar University students, this two-story dance club has pool tables, a spacious stage, and a staircase that would make Norma Desmond green with envy. 304 Orleans • 409/832-4206.

CROCKETT STREET

Formerly known as Mary's Place, this club recently changed hands and name. Miss Olivia Gardener hosts Talent Night on Tuesday. On Sunday, Latino Night includes Latin music and an all-Latino illusionist show. 485 Crockett • 409/832-4944.

HOOLIGAN'S

Though primarily a women's bar, this just-opened club is open to all. Features include karaoke night on Wed. & frequent live music, especially on Fridays & Saturdays. 6025 Martin Luther King • 409/832-0808.

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OUT IN HOUSTON

1 On Aug. 24, Bering Memorial United Methodist Church members honored departing minister **Troy Plummer** (r) and his partner, **Walter Treash**.

2 At the Aug. 15 Houston Black Tie Dinner table sales party at New Gallery, table chairman **John Parker** (r) greeted **Cliff Kitten**.

3 **Sam Wilson**, flanked by **Johnny Johnson** (l) and **Carol Clark**, brandished the trophy he received at the Aug. 8 Montrose Softball League awards banquet at the Warwick.

4 On June 12, **John Palmer** (l-r), **Kermit Eisenhut**, **Mollie Moore**, **Evin Thayer**, **Christopher Olivier**, **Alan Cable**, and **Daniel Edwards** opened a show benefiting the Arts Scholars' Fund at 405 Avondale Gallery.

5 Jenni's Noodle House owner **Jenni Tran-Weaver** hosted an Aug. 9 fundraiser for the Texas Drillers softball team. With Tran-Weaver are (standing, l-r) **Minh Tran** and **Jim Weaver** of Jenni's and **Ron Whatley**, **Matt Douglass**, **Chris Watley**, **Roy Burchett**, and **Alan Caskey** of the Drillers.

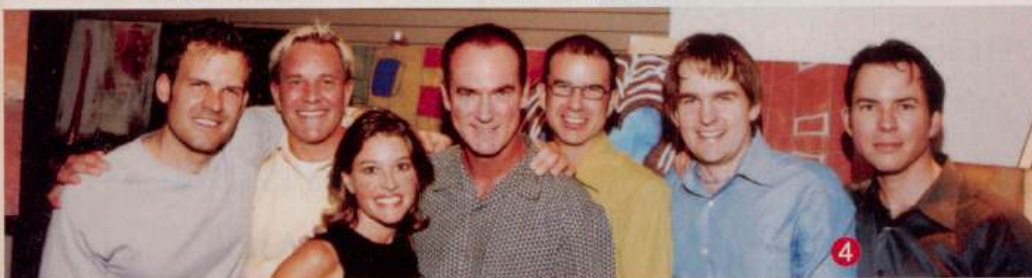
6 Houston Energy offensive tackle **Alexa Ramirez** (in uniform) and family celebrated after the team's Sept. 6 62-22 victory over the San Diego Sunfire.

7 Friends of Energy cornerback **Angie Brooks** cheered at the Sept. 27 38-27 victory over the Dallas Diamonds at Rice Stadium: (front row, l-r) **Paul Reichert**, **Christine Tyrell**, **Karen Ulczynski**, **Jared Zamarripa**; (back row, l-r) **Jennifer Peele**, **Michelle Christgeu**.

8 **Danny Spencer** of GLOBAL, the UH student group, cleaned a windshield at the May 3 benefit car wash at Mary's.

9 **Annie Parker** (c), with **Ricki Fischer** (l) and **Claire Baker**, held an autographed game ball at an HRC benefit following the Aug. 16 Houston Comets game.

10 AVES CEO **Terrence O'Neill** (l) thanked **Joel Garza** of Community Home Loan, who (with partner **Michael W. Baldwin**) will make a donation for every closing and funding of a new loan.



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