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About the cover:

Poet and publisher Shaunte Angelo leads our "People to Watch 2004" list.

Photograph by David Lewis.
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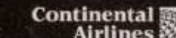
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Letters

DIRECTOR'S NOTES

Thanks for your great review of *Stories From the War on Homosexuality* ["DVD/VHS," December 2003]. I really appreciate the care that Mr. [Troy] Carrington took in writing the piece.

Arthur Dong
Los Angeles, California

Dong is the producer/director of the three-DVD box set reviewed in the December issue, which includes his documentaries Coming Out, Under Fire, Family Fundamentals, and Licensed to Kill.

POSITIVE EXPERIENCE

I can't begin to express in words how much the Positive Art Workshop ["Share the Wealth," December 2003] meant to me during a time in my life when I had little hope or direction. I had been laid off from what I thought was the best job of my life (it turned out to be a nightmare). I was out of money. COBRA insurance was sucking me dry, but I had to keep it so I could afford the drugs I needed to survive. There were absolutely no jobs on the horizon.

After my first class with Ryan Fugate, something changed. I think it might have been that I suddenly felt better about myself and, most importantly, I enjoyed my artwork. Even though I have been a professional artist for many years, his class renewed a fire in me that has not stopped yet. I am proud to say that I am starting a great new job on January 2, 2004. My partner and I had a show of our ceramic work on November 2 that was a huge success. I sincerely believe that the attitude change I experienced after Ryan's class is responsible for all of my good fortune.

For people living with HIV/AIDS, an experience like this can help us through times that otherwise would be depressing and stressful leading to a lower quality of life and declining health. Please keep up this great work if you can. After I am financially back on my feet, I want to help. I would like to see the program expanded so even PWAs who have jobs or school could attend. I am sure it would enrich their lives. Let me know how I can help.

Jim Jennings
Houston

OUR CONTRIBUTORS

Eric A.T. Dieckman co-wrote a short musical film, *Fill Up the Boot*, that received awards for best director, best soundtrack, and best screenplay in the October 10-14 Countdown Cinema competition, which spurs filmmakers to produce movies in two days and three nights.

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ORGULLO=PRIDE. "We are building bridges in the community again," says Abel Rodriguez (r), president of the Latino group GLOBO. Jose Luis Reyes serves as vice president of Gays & Lesbians Organized By Orgullo (Spanish for *pride*). This year, the three-year-old organization will seek more women members and partner with other groups, Rodriguez says. Later this month, GLOBO will aid the Royal Sovereign and Imperial Court of the Single Star with its coronation extravaganza. GLOBO is also gearing up for Baile, the Pride Week benefit dance.

Photographed by Gavyn Aaron at Marbella on Harrisburg

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BIG BUILD UP. This month, Dave Knox (l) of Maranatha and Debbie Maurelli of Resurrection lead a contingent of volunteers from both Metropolitan Community Church congregations in building a Habitat for Humanity house. The January 10-16 construction project—resulting in a GLBT-raised residence—is part of Habitat's SuperBuild XXXVIII program to finish 38 houses in Houston before the February 1 Super Bowl. On January 11, Don Gill will raise funds for the effort by producing Believe, a benefit show at Keys West.

Photographed by Yvonne Feece at Resurrection MCC

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Photo by: Paul Kolman

MARATHON MAN. On January 18, Jeff Benavides will complete his last marathon. "I've run in 10 marathons already, and I'm ready to give it up," says Benavides, who currently trains by running 28 miles weekly. After finishing races from New York to Portland, he will face his final challenge, the HP Houston Marathon, which includes a Montrose leg. Look for fans cheering him on in front of the Houston GLBT Community Center. Benavides, Thomas Street Clinic HIV health educator, does plan to keep running for fitness and health.

Photographed by David Lewis in Bell Park



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DATEBOOK

• New mayor **Bill White**, controller **Annis Parker**, and other city officials take the oath of office at the January 2 inauguration ceremony, 9 a.m., at Miller Outdoor Theatre.

• Annise Parker speaks on the Houston economy at the January 6 **Greater Houston GLBT Chamber of Commerce** dinner, 7 p.m., at the Holiday Inn Hotel & Suites Galleria. Tickets: www.ghglcc.org.

• Individuals may submit nominations for **2004 GLBT Pride Parade** grand marshals until January 10. Details: www.pridehouston.org.

• A new afternoon **HIV support group series** at Montrose Counseling Center begins January 12. To register: Bob Hergenroeder, LCSW, 713/529-0037, ext. 322, or cd@montrosecounselingcenter.org.

• Poet and performer Aaron Coleman and friends observe Martin Luther King Jr. Day with a January 19, 6:30 p.m., **Celebration of Freedom** program at the Houston GLBT Community Center.

• January 31 is the deadline for nonprofit groups to request funds from the **Bunnies on the Bayou** event. Details: www.bunnies.org.

• Resolve to play jock this year? Start warming up for the **Lone Star Volleyball Association** winter season, which begins February 8 with open play in the Jerabek Center on the University of St. Thomas campus. Details: www.lsva.org.

ANNISE VICTORIOUS



The winner: Annise Parker greets supporters at her victory celebration. Inset: Parker and partner Kathy Hubbard (l).

This election proved that a positive, issue-oriented message can yield a winning margin. This election also makes a great statement about Houston, in particular about the diversity of our great city. All you have to do is look around this room to find people of every race, ethnicity, age, gender, sexual orientation, and income level, and across the political spectrum—and I expect the vote totals to reflect that diversity as well.

"We are Houston. And we are the promise of Houston—a place where all people are welcome and what you do matters more than who you are."

With those words, Annise Parker declared

victory as city controller in the December 6 runoff election. Some of us who have followed Parker's public-service progress—community volunteer, Houston Gay & Lesbian Political Caucus president, business owner, two-time unsuccessful City Council candidate, eventual three-time winner for an at-large seat—might consider her success as just inevitable, something to take for granted. But her achievement is astounding, historic. Parker is the highest-ranking openly gay elected official in any of the 10 largest U.S. cities. And on election night she savored that achievement with her partner Kathy Hubbard and their daughters Daniela Parker and Marquitta Parker.

THE YEAR IN REVIEW

We asked a few individuals across the community to identify challenges for 2004 or make predictions.

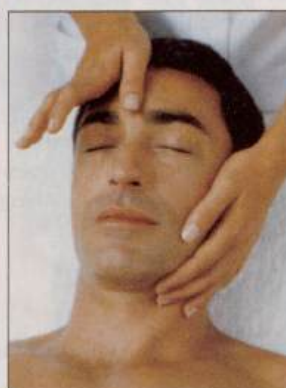
I feel that the biggest challenge to the GLBT community in 2004 will continue to be apathy. It seems that people are just willing to accept the minor gains that the apparent success of some television shows (*Queer Eye for the Straight Guy*, *Queer as Folk*, *Will & Grace*, *Ellen*) and the *Lawrence v. Texas* case have brought and not look at a broader picture. Instead of championing the right to file a tax return together or go off to Iraq and kill or be killed,

we should be working to make our streets safer to walk hand-in-hand with the ones we love. We should be working to make it so our places of employment can't decide to fire us because we went to the Pride Parade. We should be working on it so that we aren't kicked to the curb when your landlord finds out that your roommate actually shares your bedroom. We should be demanding the next phase in HIV/AIDS research, newer meds, and the beginnings of a →

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News Briefs "The Year in Review"

continued from page 16

cure or a vaccine. We should be caring for those made homeless because their family kicked them out or illness struck them down. We should be looking for the next generation of leadership, of activists to stand up and take the torch and help them to groom the generation that will follow them. We must remember and honor those who struggled to get us to where we are today, and we must honor and respect those who will lead us through the next issues. We need to support the organizations and businesses that are vital to our community before it is too late. Remember it is easier to maintain something than it is to rebuild or restart it. We need to get personal egos out of the way and make way for the community identity. We need to put the unity back in community. In the words of Benjamin Franklin, "We must hang together or surely we will all hang separately."

Chris Arasin

Chair, Q-Patrol, Inc.

Co-executive producer, *After Hours*

AIDS is the world's biggest threat—ever. We need to cure it. Until there's a cure, AIDS is not over. In 2004, we have to reduce the number of new HIV infections. The gay community has done it before. We must do it again.

Roger Donley

Attorney

Throughout the coming year, I believe that religion and the gay community will continue to dialogue and grow as God continues to re-create within our midst. 2004 will bring new considerations concerning the institution of marriage and faithful committed relationships of same-gender couples.

The year should prove to be full of discovery as we create new relationships and open dialogue with other faith traditions and the Christian Church (Disciples of Christ) in the Houston area concerning GLBT issues.

On the national front, I wonder "who will ask?" and "who will tell?" as the presidential race heats up! Regardless of who wins, I hope that we will challenge our leaders to once again revisit persons living with HIV and make a greater effort to seek out a cure and support persons living with HIV. My hope is that the year will be full of compassion for those who are still seeking employment and just trying to make ends meet.

Todd Williams

Minister, New Covenant Christian Church



I predict the GLB community will wake up and realize we already have same sex-marriage in this country in 2004. I predict that upon realizing this fact HRC and others will learn to use this information to finally overcome the barriers that exist for gay marriage. (Hint: The trans community has had legal same-sex marriage since the beginning of time!)

Sara Rook

The Transgender Unity Committee

ROOK - COURTESY OF SARA ROOK; DOWNING - DAVID LEWIS

I predict that in 2004, despite fears of the "right backlash," the issues facing the GLBT community will include:

- More states, cities, and organizations officially recognizing G/L civil unions and/or marriages;
- The defeat of the prohibitive adoptive laws in the state of Florida;
- An official "mayoral response" to the historically poor Houston police response to gay bashings in the Montrose.

Tom Downing

Human Rights Campaign dinner co-chair

The greatest challenge to the community will be the continuing push toward full equality for all of those in the community. I think this will centralize around the issue of gay marriage and the profound step that the Massachusetts Supreme Court made in the last few weeks. All across the United States, members of our community will press their employers and state governments to respect a valid legal marriage from one of the 50 states. I fully expect this to be a huge issue in the coming race for president and ultimately a huge battle within the Supreme Court to decide if the members of our community are to be equal members of our society. I hope and pray that our community will be up to this magnificent challenge.

Chris Thetford

President

Texas Human Rights Foundation

I think the two biggest challenges we face are:

- The apathetic attitude of a majority of the community. I call it the "ask not what I can do for my community but what can the community do for me" attitude. The individuals who are involved carry a great load working on behalf of the rest.
- Coming together as a united community, focusing on the things we agree on and accepting our differences. We need to build more alliances between our own organizations to work together and better communicate with each other, and we must create efficiencies of effort through partnering with others both in and outside of our community. We're all somebody's son or daughter, aunt or uncle, niece or nephew, boss or co-worker. We have allies and we need to put them to work on our behalf.

Shane McShane

President

Houston GLBT Community Center ■



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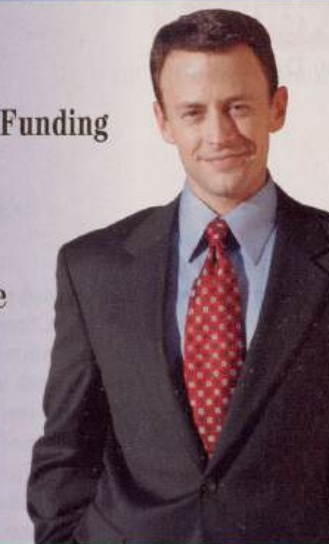
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I wanna tell you ladies and gentlemen, that there's not enough troops in the army to force the southern people to break down segregation and admit the nigger race into our theaters, into our swimming pools, into our homes, and into our churches."

When Strom Thurmond made that statement in 1948, he was the Dixiecrat candidate for president, running on the platform of "segregation today, segregation tomorrow, segregation forever."

When Thurmond made that statement, he was also the father of a 23-year-old biracial daughter—Essie Mae—who was half black. Thurmond fathered the girl when he was 22 years old and slept with his parents' black maid, who was then 16.

In 1957, when Essie Mae Washington-Williams was 28 years old, Thurmond gave what was then—and is still—the longest

filibuster in U.S. Senate history. Thurmond stood and spoke for 24 hours and 18 minutes in opposition to the 1957 Civil Rights Act, the purpose of which was to increase the number of registered black voters.

Thurmond finally died on June 26, 2003, having lived 100 years and having spent half of those years serving in the Senate opposing civil rights. In his final years, Thurmond hinted that he had had a change of heart about civil rights. He finally dropped his opposition to the Voting Rights Act. And he supported a national holiday honoring Martin Luther King Jr.

But he never publicly acknowledged Williams, who was 78 years old when Thurmond died. She waited until Thurmond died to come forward. She said she waited because she did not want to harm his political career, which she had followed.

And if Williams followed her dad's political career, she knew that he preached

hate, segregation, and never admitting "the nigger race" into white society. He certainly never admitted his daughter into his lily-white life.

In coming forward, Williams said that she had learned who her father was when she was a teenager. She said a lot of people in the black community knew, but didn't tell. She didn't tell, either, for 65 years.

When she finally told, Williams explained that "there are many stories like Sally Hemmings' and mine," referring to Thomas Jefferson's relationship with one of his slaves who bore him

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.



JUST DON'T

There are also bad arguments for gay marriage

With the country still simmering after the Massachusetts court decision that extends marriage to gay couples, it's time to separate the chaff from the wheat in the arguments for gay marriage.

There are several good arguments for gay marriage. Among these are the stability and commitment it would encourage in gay relationships and in gay life generally. That would benefit everybody, gay and straight.

There are also some bad arguments against gay marriage. An example is the selective logic of the procreation argument, which holds that nobody is required to procreate in order to marry, except gay couples, who can't procreate and so must unfortunately be excluded.

We should acknowledge, however, that we've been guilty of making some bad arguments for gay marriage. Here are three:

1. **It's all about the benefits.** The most

common argument for gay marriage emphasizes the harm that's done to gay couples by excluding them from the protections and benefits of marriage. Among these are tax benefits, settled property division and presumed child visitation and/or custody upon death or divorce, testimonial privileges in court, hospital visitation, and health benefits extended by private employers or governments to the spouses of workers. Someone has tallied over 1,000 marital benefits and privileges. Give us all these goodies, too, the argument goes.

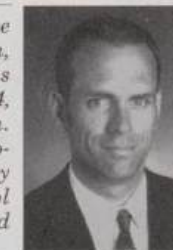
Benefits are indeed part of the story about why it's wrong to exclude gay couples from marriage, but they are not the most important part of it. Some of the benefits of marriage can be replicated—at some cost and inconvenience to the couple—through wills, trusts, and contracts.

Emphasizing the riches of marriage misses the richness of marriage. Very few people

marry in order to experience the magic of filing a joint income tax return. They marry because, in our tradition and history, marriage is the way couples in a community signal the depth of their commitment to one another. Their family and peers reciprocate by supporting and celebrating that commitment, which in turn reinforces it. Everyone understands the stakes.

If the benefits were all that mattered, civil unions would be an adequate substitute. Yet, "We're unionized" simply does not have the powerful social significance of, →

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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LeftOut continued from page 20

at least one child. She continued, "The unfortunate measure is that not everyone knows about these stories that helped to make America what it is today."

Williams is right. Her story needed to be told. And the "unfortunate measure" is that no one knew for 65 years that Strom Thurmond had a mulatto daughter. No one knew because she waited 65 years to come out as Strom Thurmond's daughter.

When Williams finally came out—when she finally acknowledged publicly whom she is—she said, "at last I feel completely free."

Coming out does that. Whoever you are. It liberates you from secrets that don't need to be kept.

I wish Williams had come out decades ago. I wish she had come out in 1948, when her dad ran for president as a Dixiecrat. I wish she had come out in 1957, when he filibustered for 24 hours in an attempt to keep blacks from voting. I wish she had come out when he was alive, so that he would have been forced to publicly acknowledge what a hypocrite he had been for the last 80 years of his life.

But she didn't. She came out when she was ready. I just wish she had been ready 50 years ago. If she had come out as Strom Thurmond's biracial daughter in 1953, he might never have been elected to the U.S. Senate in 1954.

If Essie Mae Washington-Williams had come out in 1954, she might have changed history. But she didn't. And now we'll never know what America might have been like with Strom Thurmond out of the political picture. But we do know it couldn't have been any whiter. ■

OutRight continued from previous page

"We're married." So let's argue for the benefits, but let's not stop there.

2. We have a right to marry. Another common argument for gay marriage is more legalistic, and less functional, than the first. It tends to emphasize the discrimination in the marriage exclusion, holding that gays have just as much right to marry as heterosexuals.

The problem is that while a reasonable legal argument can indeed be made for gay marriage, it is unlikely to persuade anyone who isn't already convinced that gay marriage is a good idea or at least not a bad idea. Legal conclusions follow, they do not create, arguments on the merits of an issue.

Another problem with the rights argument is that it tends to channel our efforts toward courts, where the issue will not ultimately be won, and away from

legislatures and from the hearts of our fellow citizens, where it must be won. The comparatively easy work of writing briefs for judges and their clerks will not substitute for the hard work of persuading the people we're right.

3. Gay marriage will revolutionize society, and that's good. Sociologist Kersti Yllo, a professor at Wheaton College, recently expressed this perspective. "We need to acknowledge [conservatives'] argument that gay and lesbian marriages have the potential to change civilization as we know it," Yllo said. "And that will be a good thing."

There are at least three versions of this argument. One holds that heterosexuals have screwed up marriage, and we'll do a better job. But gay couples, I predict, will suffer divorce rates just as high as their straight counterparts. There will be instances of gay spousal abuse and infidelity, just as there are for straight couples. Gay marriage is not the cause of the problems with marriage, but neither is it a solution.

A second version of the revolution argument maintains that gay marriages will be less "stifling" and perhaps more "open textured," offering a healthy alternative marital model to straight couples. What is primarily meant by these euphemisms, I think, is that gay male couples will play around more.

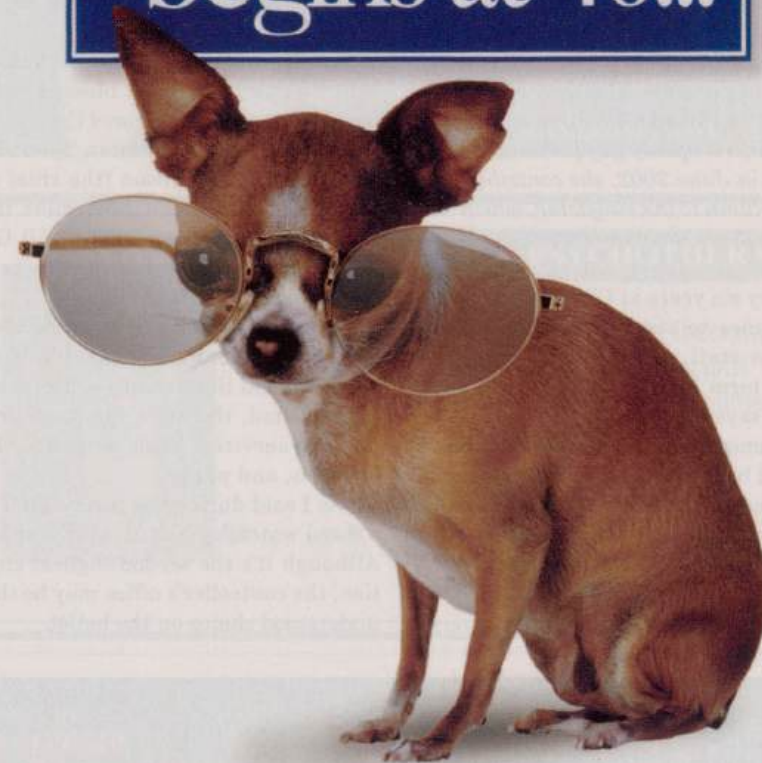
I doubt the rate of publicly "open" gay marriages will be very high, for reasons I've offered elsewhere. Further, whatever that rate, I doubt it will have any effect on straight couples because gay couples will comprise a tiny percentage of all marriages and because women will continue to demand monogamy in opposite-sex marriages.

Moreover, if gay marriage did have this "liberating" effect on straight marriage, that would be a good argument *against* gay marriage. Sexually open relationships are on average less stable and lasting than monogamous ones. Introducing even more instability into opposite-sex marriages would be terrible for the relationships themselves and for the children they often produce.

The third version of the revolution argument holds that gay marriage will undermine traditional gender roles. Like the better-living-through-adultery fallacy, this argument assumes a huge effect from a small cause. Additionally, gay relationships often tend to ape traditional ones, with one partner taking on primary bread-winning responsibilities and the other taking on primary domestic duties.

While Arguments 1 and 2 are just bad when offered by themselves, Argument 3 is just plain bad. ■

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by Annise D. Parker

IN CONTROL

"I will be a fiscal watchdog, not an attack or lap dog."

In the December 6 municipal runoff election, Annise Parker received 62 percent of the vote over opponent Bruce Tatro to win the post of city controller. Parker also just concluded three terms on Houston City Council, where she was the first openly gay person to serve. Beginning in June 2002, she contributed a monthly column to the magazine, which she has agreed to continue as controller.

Every six years at City Hall, we get a chance to start over—new mayor, new staff, new council. For better, for worse, term limits rule City Hall until the public says otherwise.

I am honored and excited to be part of what could be one of the best management teams in the city's history. As someone said in a television commercial during the campaign, "I think Bill White will be a great mayor."

One of the many challenges will be restoring people's confidence in city govern-

ment, often an investigative reporter's easiest target.

The controller's office is extremely well run. The city has been blessed with outstanding controllers: Leonel Castillo, Kathy Whitmire, George Greanias, Sylvia Garcia, and Judy Gray Johnson [the chief deputy controller appointed controller by City Council in December 2002 to fill Garcia's unexpired term after her election to Harris County commissioner].

These controllers have made the office and the city more efficient. I will aggressively uphold that tradition. The more savings we find, the more funds are freed up for city services, such as police, health, libraries, and parks.

As I said during the campaign, I will be a fiscal watchdog, not an attack or lap dog. Although it's the second-highest city position, the controller's office may be the least understood choice on the ballot.

According to the city charter, the controller's first duties are to "superintend and supervise the fiscal affairs of the city." The office employs about 80 people, slightly more than half with financial backgrounds (including 10 certified public accountants).

Basic duties include:

- keeping the city's books;
- preparing financial reports, such as the monthly statement of the preceding month's expenses and an annual report;
- performing audits to ensure that city assets are safeguarded;
- certifying that the city has the funds to pay its bills and processing payments in a timely manner;
- managing city investments;
- administering the debt portfolio and supporting new debt issuance;
- reviewing contracts to make sure work is actually performed.

Performance Audits

The controller's office has always been responsible for auditing city accounts. Does the special parks fund or the Houston Police Department petty cash fund, for instance, actually have the funds reflected in the budget? Are the proper controls in place?

Perhaps the HPD crime lab wouldn't have become such a disaster if the controller's office had been granted the authority to do independent, periodic performance audits—not setting priorities or defining goals, but evaluating whether goals are reached. I believe the city charter already gives the controller this authority. However, I have already requested that City Council place a charter amendment on the ballot that specifically grants the controller this power.

Controller's Revenue Estimates

An upbeat economy means higher sales taxes for financially strapped cities. Houston actually may break even this fiscal year. Last year was another story. Like many cities, Houston had a revenue shortfall—in our case, \$59 million. The controller's office estimated the shortfall more accurately than the mayor's office.

Unfortunately, the mayor and City Council are only required to use the controller's more conservative numbers in the spring when the controller must certify actual available funds. The rest of the year the administration is free to use its own revenue estimates.

In hard times, the temptation to use optimistic numbers can be overwhelming. I will lobby council to recommend a charter amendment that would force the mayor to use revenue projections from the controller's office.

Rainy Day Fund

I plan to be an attentive watchdog to make sure future councils don't whittle away at the substantial emergency fund I helped establish. This fund doesn't just cover emergencies, such as Tropical Storm Allison. Bond rating agencies consider the size of city's reserves in setting all-important bond ratings that determine city interest rates.

Those are just a few of the items on my plate. As controller, I will continue to write my monthly column, which I began when I served on City Council. It will focus on city finances, including the financial impact of some City Council decisions.

Annise Parker will be inaugurated as city controller on January 2. Her city website is www.ci.houston.tx.us/electedofficials/citycontroller.html.





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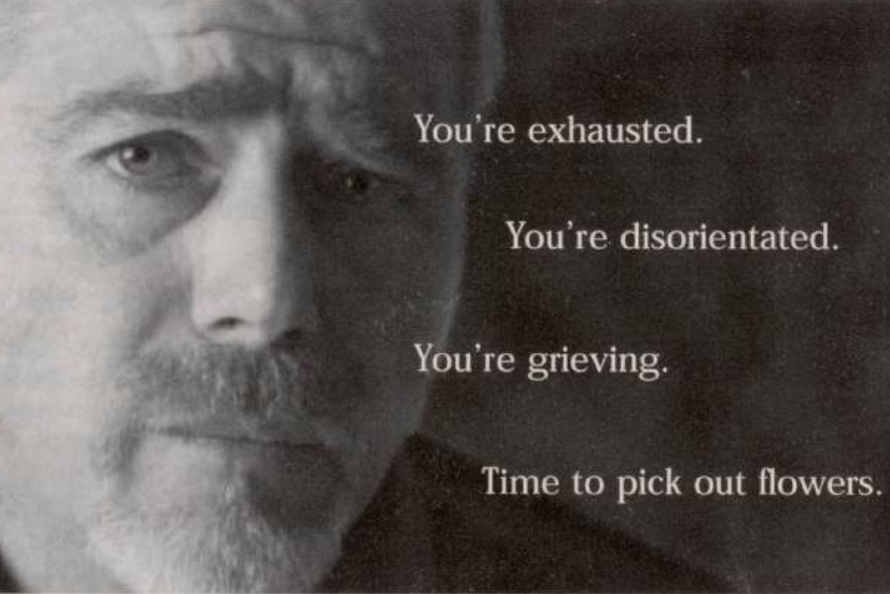
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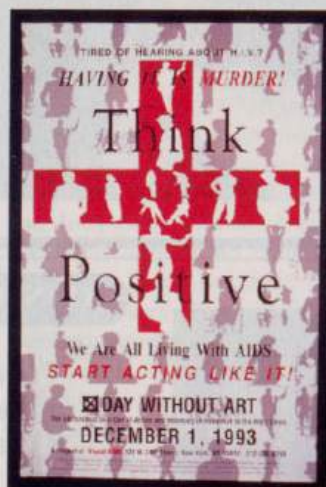
Gay and lesbian doctors hear about the HIV increase among gay men

We are living through a remarkable time in gay history," reported Ron Stall, an AIDS prevention expert with the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC), at the recent Gay and Lesbian Medical Association annual conference. "One out of four gay men who came of age during the 1970s now is either dead or living with HIV."

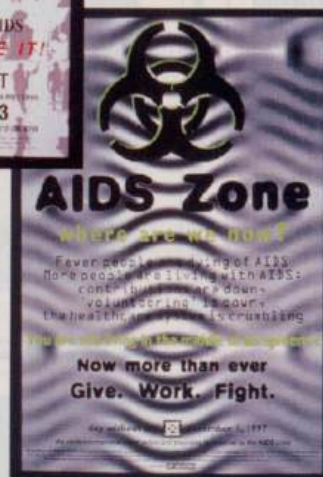
Medical professionals at the October 30–November 1 conference in Miami Beach received even more disturbing news. Evidence indicates that prevention efforts and biomedical interventions have improved the long-term outlook for the AIDS epidemic but have not halted the increase in new HIV infections among gay men, especially men of color.

Stall presented case studies showing that an unprecedented rise in risky sexual behavior among gay men is occurring worldwide despite prevention education. New HIV infections "are likely to continue to increase worldwide," Stall said, pointing to the increasing incidents of exposure to other STDs as one of the key indicators that world governments are losing the battle, especially those in Asia and the Caribbean, where infection rates have skyrocketed.

There "is nowhere in the world where numbers are decreasing" in HIV infection rates, Stall reported. The studies cited by Stall, who is chief of HIV prevention research at the CDC, indicated a more than 20-percent increase in gay men having unprotected anal sex between the years 1994 to 1999. During that same period, the San Francisco public health department reported a 14-percent increase in unprotected anal intercourse by men who were HIV positive having sex with men



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Visual AIDS in New York maintains an archive of HIV/AIDS agitprop art, including a 1993 Day Without Art broadside (l) and posters from 1993 (top) and 1997.

volving crystal methamphetamine; an increase in the number of sexual partners (exacerbated by Internet "dating"); optimism about improvements in HIV treatments; depression and relationship status; and AIDS "burnout."

Stall said he believes that the HIV prevention message often fails to be delivered effectively in targeted communities. He observed that the "monolithic" approach taken in the past to address the AIDS epidemic must change in order to address serious health problems that now confront the GLBT community. "There are multiple dangerous epidemics facing our community, and each one of them are interconnected," he said, stressing that drug abuse, depression, domestic violence, and STD incidence disproportionately affect the GLBT community. The number of epi-

demics an individual is exposed to correlates directly to whether or not that person is HIV positive, he added.

Not all the news at the GLMA conference was bad. Presenters announced the Food and Drug Administration approval of a new drug, Fos-Amprinavir, a couple of weeks prior to the conference. Also, new once-a-day drug regimens have proven effective and increase the chance for strict drug adherence. And studies in Brazil have confirmed that post-exposure prophylactics (PEPs) have proven effective in significantly reducing the infection rates in men who participated in risky sexual behavior the night before.

California-based journalist Dan Aiello wrote about Charles Casillo, author of the new John Rechy biography, in the November issue.

FOR MORE HELP

IS THERE A GAY DOCTOR IN THE HOUSE? Founded in 1981, the San Francisco-based Gay and Lesbian Medical Association works to improve health care for GLBT people and to foster professional

climate for GLBT professionals in medicine. Among its programs, the nonprofit group offers a free online referral service to health-care providers across the country. Info: www.glma.org.

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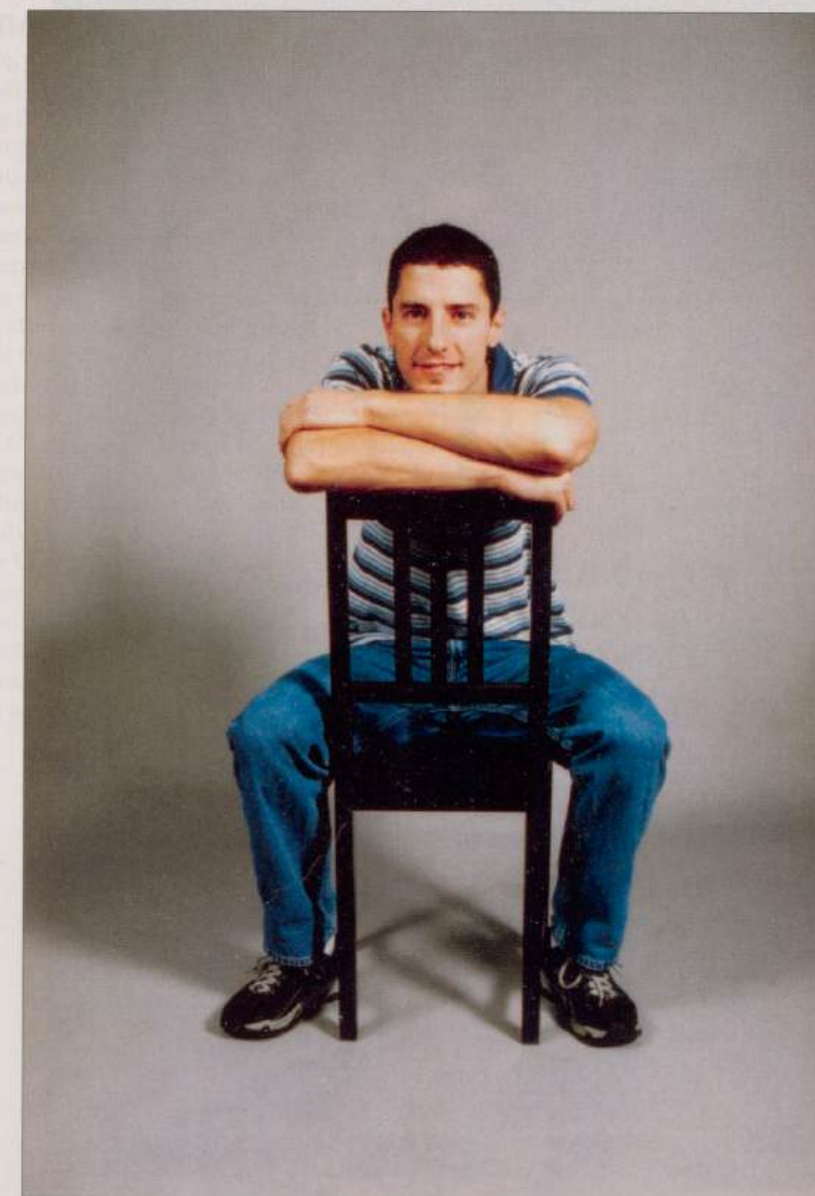
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People to Watch 2004

From poet to bioengineer to bright young activist, our second annual class of intriguing community standouts packs plenty of variety

Profiles by Thomas Blanton, Eric A.T. Dieckman, and Josef Molnar

Photography by David Lewis



Skip Mercier

Using an enemy against itself is a useful strategy—one that Skip Mercier, a bioengineering doctoral student at Rice University hopes will lead to advances in HIV/AIDS vaccine work. The Houston native is currently focusing on gene-therapy experiments that use viruses to deliver an immune system-boosting genetic payload directly to the initial site of HIV infection: the intestine and vaginal areas. Mercier, 26, is a member of the Bayou City Boys Club, the social organization that gives money to HIV service organizations, and he explains his interest in HIV research is based on a real-world perspective.

"Immunity has always been fascinating to me, and HIV research is more relevant to me and people I know," he says. "It hits close to home."

If the experiment is successful, people around the world will have another tool to use in the fight against HIV. Mercier says he is happy to have the opportunity to help others, and hopes he can continue the fight against HIV after he completes graduate school. "I think I just lucked out on it," he says, "but I really enjoy what do." —Josef Molnar



Sharon Ferranti

Anyone who has seen openly gay filmmaker Sharon Ferranti's work knows she won't stop with one hit. After her master's thesis film *A Thousand Miles* was named one of the 10 best queer shorts in 2000 at the Egyptian Theater in Hollywood, she set out to make another movie. Armed with a cast and crew from California, New York, and Texas, the Amarillo-turned-Houston resident headed to the Hill Country near Austin. The result is *Make a Wish*, a horror flick with a cast of lesbian characters. Ferranti says her hands-off directing style allowed the actors to shine. "A good director creates an environment where everyone can do her best work," she says, "and if you're lucky, you won't get in the way of that."

Ferranti plans an early 2005 local release for *Make a Wish* at the Aurora Picture Show—after screening the movie this year at film festivals nationwide, where she hopes to garner exposure and more awards. In her spare time, Ferranti volunteers with Writers in the Schools, which allows at-risk youth to work with experienced writers. Always looking ahead, Ferranti said she has started to gain inspirations for a new film. Can you say *Make a Wish 2*? —JM

Johnny O. Deal

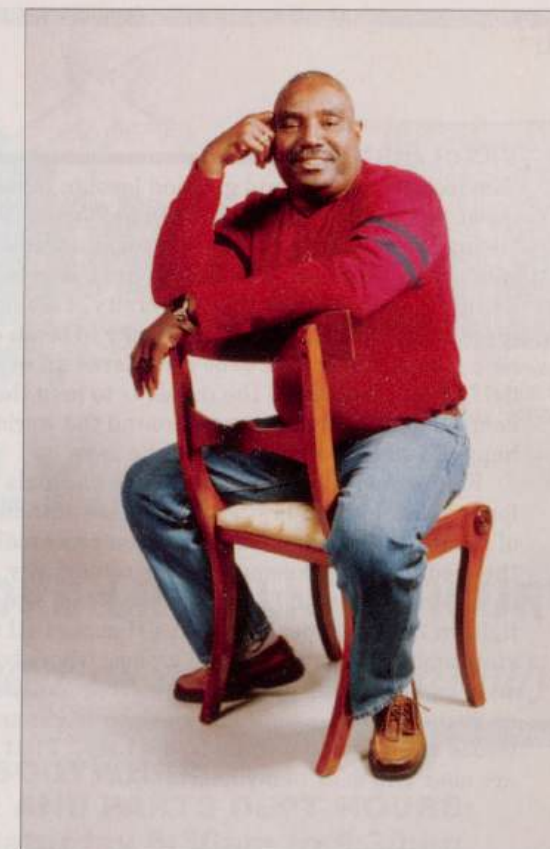
Eight years ago, Johnny O. Deal arrived at the Harris County Hospital District's Thomas Street Clinic as a client. Wanting to be more involved, he began attending meetings of the patient advisory committee, eventually taking the position of second chair. He took over as the committee director in June.

In his new role, Deal uncovers the needs of the clinic's clients and ensures these needs are addressed and met. Additionally, he is instrumental in the clinic's outreach programs, and often speaks at classes held by the clinic for professionals in the medical field.

"It's important that people treat those living with HIV and AIDS as people, not objects," Deal says, adding, "The Thomas Street Clinic really does care about its clients."

Most importantly, though, Deal wants to raise awareness of the clinic, which cares for nearly 6,000 patients (roughly 60 percent of people living with HIV/AIDS in Harris County), so that it is perceived not just as a facility for those living with HIV and AIDS, but as a resource for everyone.

"I want to get the [GLBT] community more involved," Deal says. "I want to let them know what the Thomas Street Clinic is all about." —Thomas Blanton



Robbie Harmeson, Amber Grant, and Vada Barnett

Amber Grant and Vada Barnett were disappointed with the greeting-card industry. "We'd both been searching for lesbian products that we felt captured our particular lives," Barnett says. "We found that not only were there few cards, but that the cards we found were not a match with our personalities."

After spending more than a year in development and research, the two friends, along with third partner Robbie Harmeson, combined Barnett's graphic

design background and Grant's writing and photography talents to launch Girl-Co. Their company produces and markets greeting cards, stationery, buttons, bookmarks, and T-shirts geared toward the diverse lesbian community.

Girl-Co currently markets most of its products online (www.girl-co.com) or at community events. Overwhelmingly positive feedback, Bartlett says, has the trio considering expansion options. "We are currently in the process of

expanding Girl-Co from an e-commerce/festival business," she says. "We hope to have our own storefront in the Houston area, and then branch out."

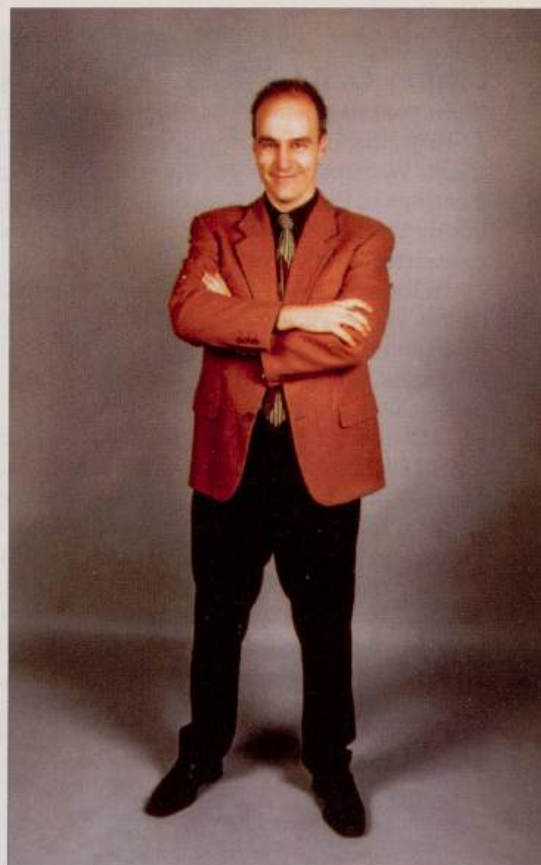
Within the next year, Girl-Co plans to add apparel, magnets, and calendars to its growing inventory. "We want a company that truly captures the eclectic nature of our entire community,"

Barnett says. "We are diverse. We have many facets that are not tapped into." —TB

Victor Flatt

"Environmental law and gay and lesbian issues are really about the rights to be human beings," Victor Flatt says. "Being treated fairly is important no matter what you're looking at." As the first A.L. O'Quinn Chair in Environmental Law at the University of Houston Law School, Flatt considers himself lucky to be an openly gay man who also happens to be considered an expert in his field. "I feel like one of the duties is to help the environment in Houston and around the world, and I'm happy to do that as a gay man," he says.

Flatt's environmental experience parallels his passion for gay-and-lesbian law issues: He has authored a number of reports on the topic, and has been repeatedly tapped by the media as a spokesman for the community. As a national chair of the Lambda Legal Defense Fund, which led the fight in 2002 to repeal the Texas Homosexual Conduct statute, he also says living in a place where both environmental and gay law issues frequently arise presents an exciting challenge. "I can work on environmental law issues and gay and lesbian issues here," Flatt says. "Both are near and dear to my heart." —JM



Shannon Rhodes

Grrl-power has found a new beat every Saturday night at Chances Bar, where Shannon Rhodes, the booking and events manager, gives women a chance. Rhodes took her promotions experience from Arkansas, where she worked with a friend's band, into the Houston scene to help female-fronted musical groups find a place. "Being part of the gay community and supporting women in music is my way

of helping out," Rhodes says. "Women struggle a lot to get opportunities, and this gives them a place to play, gay or straight."

Assisted by her girlfriend Debbie Tosh, Rhodes scopes out local and national groups to play at the club, and the Chances website brings in even more groups. "Our goal is to have diversity in music because we try to have a diversity in people here," Rhodes

says. "We've created a demand for women musicians in Houston now." The idea has become so popular, in fact, that Chances has even hired a booking assistant and sound engineer. Although Rhodes helps other women to find their voices, don't expect to find her on stage. "I have a great love of music and I can play a little," she says, "but I can't sing!" —JM

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Juan L. Garza

The greatest satisfaction Juan Garza, M.D., new medical director of the Montrose Clinic, receives from work is in the daily struggle to improve patients' health and lives. One such example came in a male prostitute who had been working the Montrose area, getting paid extra for not using condoms. He had no family in the U.S. and had taken to the streets to avoid an abusive partner. The patient was diagnosed with gonorrhea, syphilis, and HIV with an initial CD4 cell count of 50.

Over time, he opened up to Garza, expressing his shame and regret at length and explaining how he wished to see his family in Central America but was too ashamed to return, looking as ill as he did. "I am happy to say that in two months and with help of the social work department and antivirals," Garza reports, "he is doing wonderful with a CD4 of 250 and undetectable viral load and is now planning to visit home."

Garza says he hopes that in the future Montrose Clinic will expand its role to that of a primary-care setting without losing focus on the HIV community, offering nonjudgmental medical care to anyone in need of it. —Eric A.T. Dieckman

Paige Mahogany

While looking for an avenue to address issues facing transgender individuals, Paige Mahogany came across Community Awareness for Transgender Support, a nonprofit that had recently floundered because of funding issues. She partnered with previous executive director Cristan Williams and other members to transfer the base of operations from Alvin/Galveston to Houston. Mahogany's eventual goal is to reopen the CATS shelter for homeless trans people while also expanding services to help the trans community with counseling, housing, and financial stability issues.

Mahogany also advocates a more public stance for CATS to help both the straight and gay communities understand transgender people and issues. "We have been portrayed in the media as prostitutes and drag queens, and we have to change that," she says. "Straights and some gay people need to understand that just because I'm transitioning, it doesn't make me any less of a person."

Mahogany has recruited a board of directors that includes members of the gay community who can offer diverse viewpoints. "We hope that the community will embrace CATS as we go around telling people about us," she says. "It's going to be a long process, but we're going to start from the bottom and go to the top." —JM



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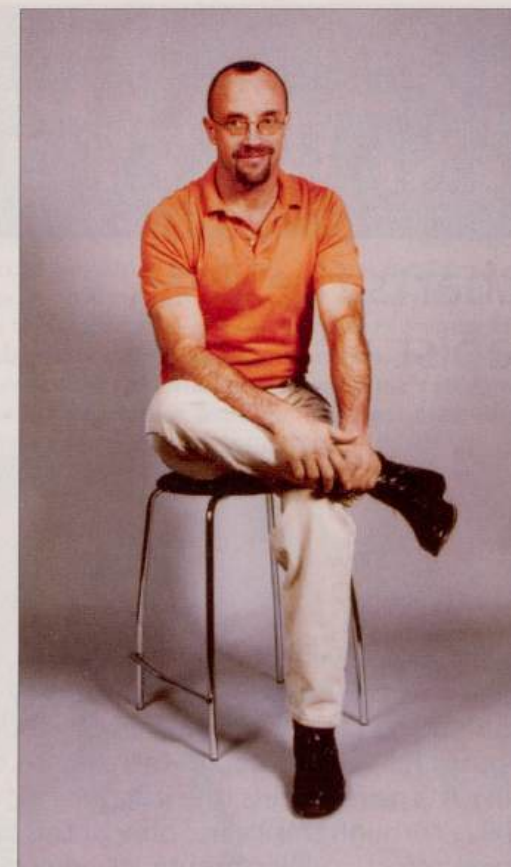
Marla Dukler

The day after her birthday in January 2002, Marla Dukler filed a lawsuit against the Klein School District for refusing to allow her to establish a gay-straight alliance in her high school. As a member of a new generation of young gay activists, the 17-year-old junior decided to bring the law onto her side (with help from the American Civil Liberties Union). She won, and this year the Klein gay-straight group started with 20 members, most of whom are nongay allies.

Dukler said the experience has also helped determine her future direction: She chose to attend Northwestern University in Illinois because of its strong gay-and-lesbian organization. In the fall she will begin study, majoring in political science as she works toward her goal of being a lawyer.

For now, Dukler spreads the word about the benefits of understanding between people regardless of orientation. Last year, she and other students and teachers formed the group NO HATE, which helps others establish gay-straight alliances in the schools.

Dukler reports that the Klein administration and the school board—once her worst critics—now rank among her strongest supporters. “[The principal] even admitted he’d grown in the past year because of the experience,” Dukler says. Now *that’s* progress. —JM



Fred Walters

The inspiration for the Houston Buyers Club came to Fred Walters during a visit to a health-food store—“when I wrote that \$250 check for my monthly supply of vitamins.” Thus was born the nonprofit organization dedicated to providing affordable supplements and nutritional education to persons living with HIV/AIDS and other chronic conditions.

Walters, Buyers Club executive director and “founding father,” studied to become a Catholic priest before moving to Texas and finding a job with the People With AIDS Coalition. In November he led the Buyers Club to a 2,000-square-foot storefront facility on Yoakum. In the new location, Walters and staff will have room to present twice-monthly educational seminars.

“I’d like for the Buyers Club to become a central operation for the entire Montrose community where people can come for their nutritional health needs—especially on Saturdays when our nutritionist is on duty,” Walters says. “We want to address a broad range of health issues.”

This year, Walters will reach beyond Montrose with a new publication, *How to Manage Side Effects*. The semiannual magazine, supported by Abbott Laboratories, will be distributed across the nation through medical offices, hospitals, and health departments. A Spanish-language version will also be available. —TB

Shaunte Angelo

At age 12, Shaunte Angelo began writing poetry. “It originally started as a hobby,” she says, “but then it became a way to express myself.” After taking several writing classes, she explored getting her work published, finally deciding to do it herself. In 2002, Angelo released her first collection of erotic poems, *Trembling Naked* (available at Brazos Books or www.smakk.net).

“There are some childhood memento poems in there, too, but the erotic is what inspires me the most,” Angelo says.

After graduating from the University of Houston Downtown with a degree in professional writing, the 29-year-old Angelo saw a need for a local publication focusing on women in the GLBT community and women in the arts.

So she did something about it. Her magazine *h.e.r.s.* (Houston Entertainment Rights and Sexuality, www.hershouston.com) will hit GLBT-friendly Montrose locations in February. “Our first issue is going to feature Madalyn Sklar of GoGirlsMusic, and we’ll have several short pieces about local women artists.”

Self-publishing a magazine can be a daunting task, but Angelo shrugs off adversity. “I’ve got several good friends with experience in this,” she says, adding, “We’ll see how it goes. I’ve got a printer and a credit card.” —TB

Thomas Blanton, Eric A. T. Dieckman, and Josef Molnar contribute frequently to OutSmart magazine.



WEB EXTRA: WHERE ARE THEY NOW?

Check out www.outsmartmagazine.com for an update on our People to Watch 2003 selections, including then-City Council rep, now controller Annise Parker.

Heaven Knows

Our astrologer Lilly Roddy charts the year.
Pluto, find a therapist



Lilly looks ahead: Watch your spending, Virgo. Prepare for travel, Aquarius. Play with your inner child, Pisces.

Photograph by John Conroy

Illustrations by David Eduardo Flores Perez

You will notice five sections for each sign, one for each of the outer planets. You may discern that the planets sometimes have cross-purposes for you. Although this may be confusing, it is nevertheless the situation that you will live through this year. Some of the outer planets affect smaller groups of your signs. However, you may or may not be aware that you have other heavenly bodies besides the Sun in that sign. And those outer planets' forecasts also apply to you. The only way to actually know this is to have your chart run. Call your local astrologer or look on the Internet. There are several sites that will generate your chart at no cost.

For this next year, Mercury retrograde periods are 12/17-1/6, 4/6-4/30, 8/9-9/2, and 11/30-12/20. Mercury retrograde is good for review of the past but never a good time to start new projects. Review client files, contact people from the past, and clean up closets and attics.

This year Venus, planet of love and romance, goes retrograde as well. Venus has dominance over relationships and money. And you will be questioning both 5/17-6/29. Avoid making new commitments during this time either for love or money. Problems in both areas will come to the surface, and this is an excellent time to deal with them.

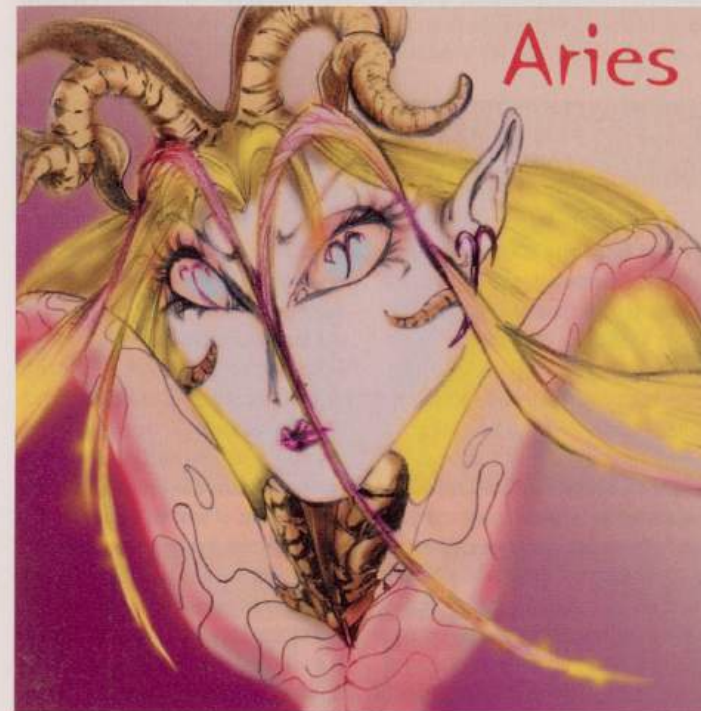
Eclipses this year are in Taurus and Scorpio, except for the first one in Aries. This will arouse passion, intensity, ideals about money and wealth and trust, and deep emotional attachments. Eclipse dates are 4/19, 5/4, 10/13, and 10/27.

Aries (March 21-April 19)

Jupiter. This year, Jupiter begins the year in your solar sixth house of work and health habits. You can expect this part of your life to be very busy, even to the point that you may have more work than you can handle. You should expect promotions, or you might explore new avenues for work. They may move you to a different office, or your work location could change altogether. In September, Jupiter moves into your solar seventh house of partnerships and will remain there until

forward. Be prepared in March. You will have a big time of spring cleaning.

Uranus. There is an undercurrent of change in spiritual beliefs. You are looking for some tenets that really embrace your sense of individuality. Your own traditional views will rub you the wrong way. And you will be more outspoken about these views. If others tell you the way to enlightenment, you will feel challenged and respond in a very direct way.



August 2005. All relationships are more positive for you. If you are single, this is an excellent time to bring a relationship into your life. For an existing relationship, this should be a good time for her or him. This can also lead to a business partner in your life, if you are looking for such connections.

Saturn. This year, Saturn is stirring things up with your family this year. You are working at establishing a strong base of emotional support by examining the past and getting your life in order. Most of you have already started and are working on getting your home more homelike. You are cleaning out your closets and family members who don't really belong. Some of you are looking at trying to establish some roots. You are operating from a more pragmatic sense than usual. And you are considering the consequences of your actions much more than you normally do. You may also feel more judged about who you are and your sense of worth in the family. Overall, you are interested in cleaning up your past and moving

Your natural sensitivities are increased. You will not be drawn to as much activity with others as you were in the past. You will also be more concerned with your partner's health as you whip him/her into shape.

Neptune. Friendships are harder to define this year. You are less clear about what you want and more open to various kinds of people. And some people who have been in your life are moving on. The reasons for the separation are not always so clear. On the subconscious level, you are looking for friends with a spiritual or soul connection. In business, you should pay attention to the financial picture of the company that you work for. There could be things going on behind the scenes that you should be prepared for. Relationships are a bit easier as your partners are taking on more responsibility for fun and play.

Pluto. You are more comfortable living with your own sense of the truth. You don't feel that you have to prove anything to anyone.

Any travel that you do this year will generate a profound experience. You will feel past-life connections. If you are a writer or a teacher, this is an excellent time to get your message out to the public. There is more general acceptance to what you believe. Communication

with your partner is more absorbing and intimate than it has been. Try to expand your environment. Travel, attend lectures, take classes, visit museums, and seek out people from different cultures. This is a wonderful time of intellectual growth.

taurus (April 20-March 20)

Jupiter. Your creative juices are flowing as Jupiter begins the year in your solar fifth house of children, playfulness, hobbies, and creative ventures. If you want to apply this energy to work, you will have greater magnetism and chart. This will help to sell yourself or any ideas. It may also make you a bit lazy, and you will not want to push yourself at work. All your senses are heightened during this time. You will want more food, more drink, and more physical pleasures. After September, Jupiter enters your solar sixth house of work, service, and health. You can anticipate more activity at work through increased workloads, classes, or even travel associated with work.

Saturn. Getting your day-to-day routines in order is your plan for this year. All your actions will be contemplated before you take any sort of action. Your actions are based on improving your daily existence. And if they don't do that, you will not expend the energy. You can expect to improve on your education and communication. Maybe consider getting a new car. In business, you are working to make things run more effectively. There will be some re-organization going on. New computers or office equipment will possibly be a

part of the plans. In relationships, you are trying to be as clear as you can in your communication with your partner. You are making plans for the future, and you want all interchanges to be crystalline.

Uranus. New friendships are on the horizon for you. You are really looking for new people to bring into your life to help break you out of your routines. Old friendships may seem stifling. This will be a time when you part ways with people that you have associated with for a long time. In career, you are looking for new, dynamic, and exciting ways of marketing your talents. You could do this through school or updating current skills. Overall, you are in a more playful mood and are coming out of the serious mood that permeated your life over the last year.

Neptune. Some of you are experiencing some loss of connection to your career path. Many of you are questioning just why you are here on the planet and what you are supposed to be doing. You can work harder, but that won't help unless you are internally nourished by the work that you do. Your work must help others. You won't be satisfied with just getting a paycheck. Inner work such as →



taurus

continued from previous page

therapy, yoga, and spiritual retreats will help. Those of you born May 1-6 or with planets at those degrees will be feeling this the strongest. February, May, August, and November are the most intense months for this energy.

Pluto. Relationships and intimacy are the issues with this planet. At the heart of the matter are what you and your partner have in

common. Often the first problems encountered with this planet center around the way each person handles money. These discussions are what draw the couple together to talk about more profound topics. Sexual dysfunction or lack of sex altogether can be experienced as couples search for the connections that solidify their relationship. This will have the most impact on those of you born May 8-13 or with planets at those degrees. The strongest months for this are February, May, August, and November.

Gemini (May 21-June 21)

Jupiter. With Jupiter in your solar fourth house of family, home, and domestic matters, you are feeling very restless in your present location. Many of you will move. Others will update your current living environments by remodeling or redecorating. If there are problems between you and family members, this can help to smooth things over. It won't make the problems go away, but it will make all parties more open to all points of

at what worth you have in society and how others treat you. You are demanding more respect from everyone around you. In work, you want to be compensated for your expertise. And you may feel depressed or ready to look for a new job if you are not paid adequately. If you have old financial problems, you will work very hard this year to get all that cleared up. You will not be burdened by these old problems.



view. In September, Jupiter moves into your solar fifth house of play, love affairs, and art. Your natural creativity will come to the surface. You may take classes to enhance your natural talents. You will attract more people to you both in business and in social activities. This will make you laid-back, and you will not feel motivated to do things other than what you like.

Saturn. You are focused on finances this year and getting that part of your life organized. On the personal level, you are looking

Uranus. Career paths are challenged as you look to update, invigorate, or totally change your chosen path. Mostly, you are just bored with what you have been doing, and you have to re-invent yourself. If you do this consciously, you will keep down the amount of drama in your life. If you wait, you will sabotage yourself, and you may be let go. You may consider going into your own business or getting involved with friends in their businesses. Consulting would be an excellent path for you. You want more freedom of choice in your daily existence.

Neptune. You are stimulated to go beyond your normal horizons or knowledge and information and open yourself up to psychic or intuitive responses. You will want to know more about the different religions of all cultures. And you will be seeking the things that have common ground rather than differences. In your way, you are seeking the common truth that binds all groups. Normal outlets of learning will seem commonplace. You will have to have the experience to know it. This is strongest for those of you born June 1-6 or with planets at those degrees.

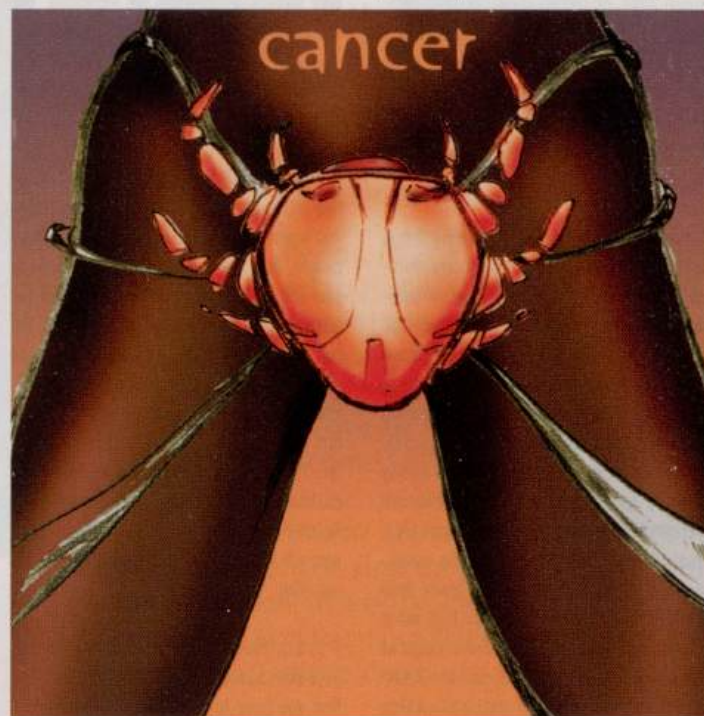
Pluto. Continuing her journey through your house of relationships, Pluto carves out the truth about what you really want for

yourself. This can create a drive for perfection in seeking a partner, which can be a real problem when you don't have the ideal picture in mind. Will you know that person when you meet? Most likely, you will not. This expunges all the negatives that you have created in your relationship structure. And what will be left will be the pristine essence of that perfection. This can create real problems for existing relationships. Many of you will feel that you are on an emotional roller-coaster ride from hell. Find a good therapist or a divorce lawyer. This is strongest for those of you born June 9-14 or with planets at these degrees. The most consequential times of the year for this are March, June, September, and December.

cancer (June 22-July 22)

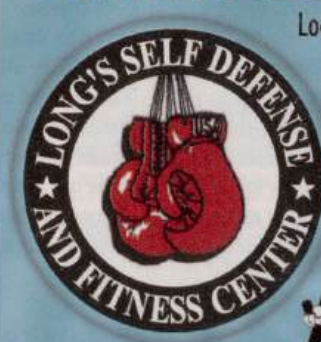
Jupiter. This year Jupiter moves through your solar third house of communications, immediate surroundings, and learning. You are open to new ideas and generally just want to know more. You may also be the person who gives out information and takes on the teacher role. Your daily activity increases and may even take on a life of its own. Be sure to keep a limit on what you agree to do; otherwise, you will run out of time, attempting to follow through with your goals. In September, Jupiter moves into your solar fourth house of family, emotions, and real estate. You may get the moving bug and start looking for a new place to live. And your family will have more contact with you as circumstances pull you all back together for ancestral traditions.

Saturn. The area that you are getting in order this year is *you*. You are more focused on your health, your appearance in the world, equity in relationships, and your overall sense of authority in society. You are your own harshest critic and will pay more attention to negative views of yourself rather than the positives. This can make you feel depressed. You may want to avoid the glare of external viewing. On the positive side, you are motivated to make all parts of your life better. This is a perfect year for that to happen. Essentially, all the things that aren't working will have to be repaired, or you will get rid of them. That can include relationships, clients, friends, family members, and excess weight. After March, you will get a real boost in your sense to complete this process. continued on page 42



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cancer

continued from page 40

Uranus. What a mind-expanding time you are getting with this visit from Uranus! New ideas seem to be coming to you through spiritual guides or increased development of your intuition. Friends will be very supportive of this process and may be the ones to point it out to you. You are ready to incorporate large cultural views into a single perspective. School or extended classes may be the paths that you take to get these views in hand. Traveling would be particularly beneficial for you. Expressing your individuality will be so natural and so easy that others will see you as a leader. But you will simply see yourself as a person who seeks a new path.

Neptune. With this planet's influence, you are searching for a spiritual intimacy between you and your partner(s). Others might more commonly refer to this as a search for your soul mate. You endeavor to feel a genuine connection. Relationships are parts of ourselves that are unexpressed, unconscious, or

shadow projections. When we don't really know our own spirit, seeking the divine in others is an illusionary process that leads to disappointment and betrayal. Your own distance in your relationship could drive your partner from you. Seek connection on the earth before you choose to fly to heaven. This is strongest for those of you born June 4-8 or with planets at those degrees.

Pluto. Work and health habits are going through a time of cleaning out and cleaning up. You are interested in a permanent fix on these areas of your life. At work, they could be remodeling your office or replacing your computer system. With your health, you are more aware than ever. This is not by choice but by the need to pay better attention to yourself and your obsessive habits. And even in this, you anticipate finding the process that will change your bad habits for the rest of your life. Visit the doctor, the dentist, the chiropractor, the acupuncturist, the herbalist, and the homeopath. You need all their points of view. This is strongest for those of you born July 10-14 or with planets in those same degrees.

leo (July 23-August 22)

Jupiter. As the year begins, Jupiter is visiting your solar second house of money, resources, and talents. This will help you make more money and spend more money. You don't

After September, Jupiter moves into your solar third house. You will notice that your daily activities increase. There seems to be more going on that you can do or keep up with. You



want to have limitations placed on your expenditures. This is a good time to make investments for your future security. You will want to be recognized for your intelligence and analytical skills. And you may increase your ability to make money through these processes.

are interested in learning and may find yourself taking classes.

Saturn. Spiritual reality is playing a big role in your life this year. You want to know how you fit into the Universe. But you are

more interested in making this quest a practical application of those spiritual ideals rather than just lip service. You could consider it a view of your environmental or spiritual health. In addition, you are taking a very critical view of religion and spiritual beliefs from your past. This will encourage you to look beyond what you know to develop deeper beliefs that are grounded in your own life experiences. You are also more selective about the people you allow in your life. Even romantic relationships could seem shallow as you grow beyond your own ethereal self.

Uranus. You are freeing yourself from old notions and ideas about intimacy and sexual attitudes. You are experimental and want to have more fun. This will provoke your partner and the current rules you operate under. This can cause reactions of fear or inadequacy in your partner. Try to bring him/her into the process as an adventure so that he/she doesn't assume blame for your new interest. This is the beginning of the breaking down of barriers between you and your partner. Truth will have her way, and she cannot be stopped. As you become more open, you will talk about things between yourselves that you never thought you would have discussed.

Neptune. With Neptune in your relationship sector, you may choose to not have relationships or to enter a period of celibacy. You

are more interested in spending time with yourself than others. With your sensitivity levels so strong, interactions with others, even pleasant ones, can be painful. You may also feel that you are trying to make commitments to yourself rather than to others. Issues around desertion will come up, and you will be sad and may not know why. They are buried in your past, and your outer adult would prefer that you just forget them because they happened a long time ago. Neptune isn't happy with that approach. This is strongest for those of you born August 3-8 or with planets at those degrees.

Pluto. Pluto can stir your children to be their own persons. This is a good thing if they are 30 and are pushing toward relationships or career goals. This can be a difficult thing if your children are teenagers or younger. They do not want to be limited by society's norms and mores. This can be a time when you are separated from your children. On the internal level, your own inner child is being awakened, and she is hungry. And she wants to come first, and darn those who think their needs are greater than hers. Creative outlets such as art classes, play workshops, etc. are important at this time. If you try and repress her, you will become the brat you really are. This is strongest for those of you born August 10-16 or with planets in those degrees.

virgo (August 23-September 22)

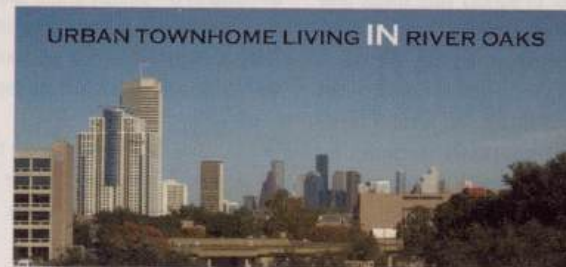
Jupiter. Jupiter begins the year moving through your solar first house of self, personality, and your physical body. It is very easy for your appetites to increase during this time. You may want more people around you, more activity, and more food and drink in your mouth. You are certainly charming, and people will be drawn to you like a magnet. This is a great time to promote yourself in business or in personal relationships. On the other hand, you are not roused to do anything other than what you like to do. Try to find a balance. This becomes an issue in September as Jupiter enters your solar second house of resources. You are more aware of the connections between your resources and your relationship skills. And you will do your best to enhance both of these things. Watch your spending. You are likely to justify whatever you want.

Saturn. You reevaluate support from friends and organizations this year. These things have to have a real purpose in your life. It would be normal to imagine that you are pulling away from the groups that you have been associated with in the past. You

are not playing the leadership role that you have in the past. Others may see you as distant and captious. This will also occur in your friendships. You will judge them much more harshly than you once did. Be careful. You may be very right in the end but also very alone. In business, you are evaluating the value of your company or business. You are supposed to help improve that situation. Step up to the front and put your ideas out there. They are waiting for a guide to help them through this North Wind.

Uranus. Routines in partnerships are out the window. You are looking for new, fun, exciting ways to be in a partnership. This will be a very stressful time on existing relationships. Often, there is one person in the relationship who doesn't want to change, and this will force the other person into action. If this is happening to you, then you are not addressing your own internal or shadow desires. One thing that will be true is that your current relationship will have to change or it will come to an end. This will be especially tense from mid May through the end of June.

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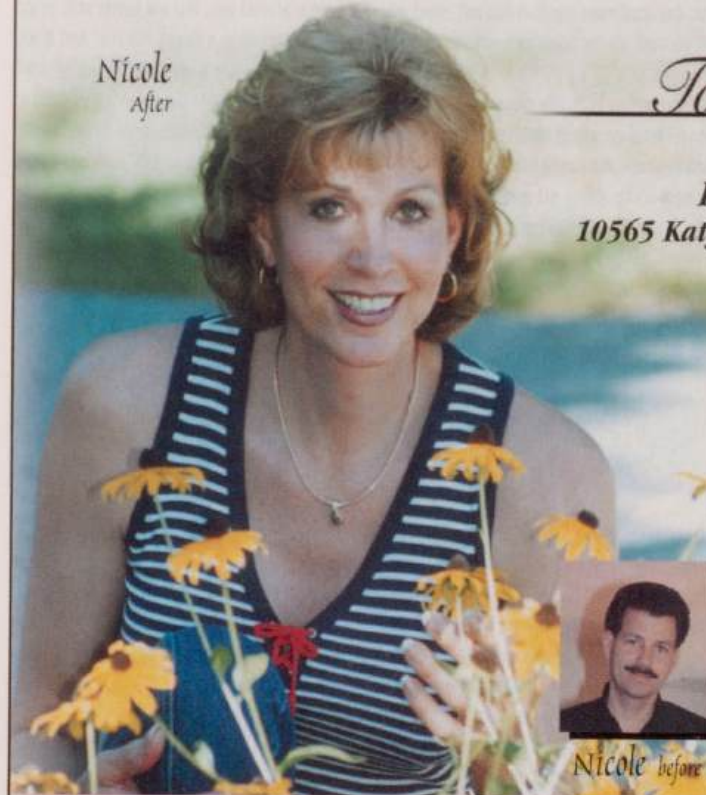
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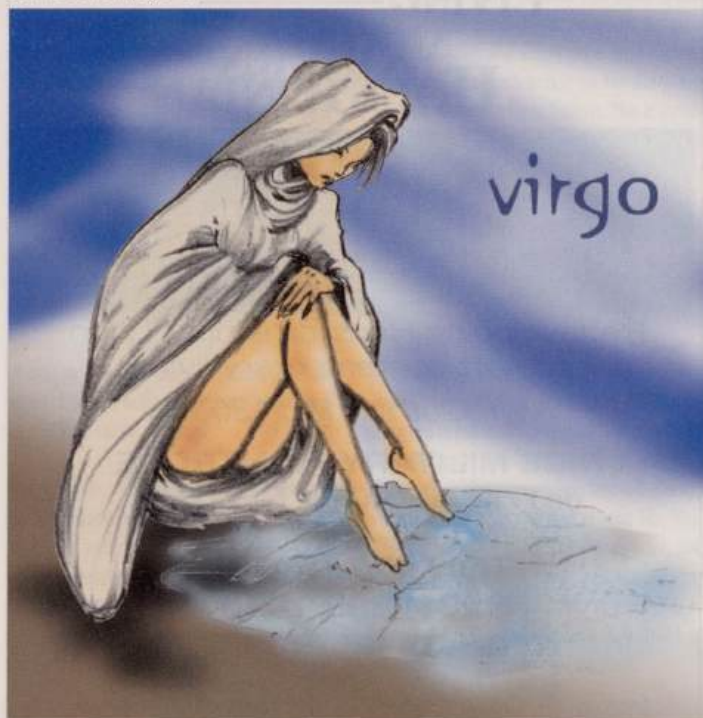
Transgender Feminization



Sheena Alford
TG Care Specialist

virgo

continued from page 42



Neptune. Your work needs to be driven by inspiration, dreams, and emotional intuition. Your normally practical mind is stepping outside the logic sequence that you use to arrive at answers. Instead, you are being moved to higher states of understanding. Working at this level can make you tire more easily, and you will find it harder to withstand the strain. In a sense you are channeling information directly from the spiritual source. Your words have deep meaning to others even if you don't understand the impact it has on them. This has the greatest impact on those born September 3-8 or with planets at those degrees.

Pluto. Pluto is cutting the umbilical cord that connects you to your family and your emotional past. Fears of rejection or withholding of love will not hold you back. You clean out all the rot that is at the bottom of your emotional swamp. Toxic cleanup has a special meaning for you. The good thing is that you are no longer inhibited by fear, imagined or real. The difficult thing is that you must find your own reason for getting up every morning. Swim through the swamp to fly to the sun. This is strongest for those of you born September 10-15 or with planets at those degrees.

Libra (September 23-October 23)

Jupiter. Friends' and associates' resources are helpful to you as Jupiter begins its travel in your solar twelfth house of empathy, compassion, and the inner spirit. You are inspired to analyze your work habits and routines and improve upon these aspects of yourself. You will be drawn to look for a deeper spiritual meaning in life and the interconnection to all the activities you participate in. You will want more time to yourself, or you will be much more selective about those with whom you want to spend time. After September, Jupiter moves into your solar first house of personality, vitality, and physical appearance. You are more positive and more open about your life than you have been in 12 years. You will draw more positive people and events into your life. Be careful about self-indulgence. This is a time when it is easy to gain weight.

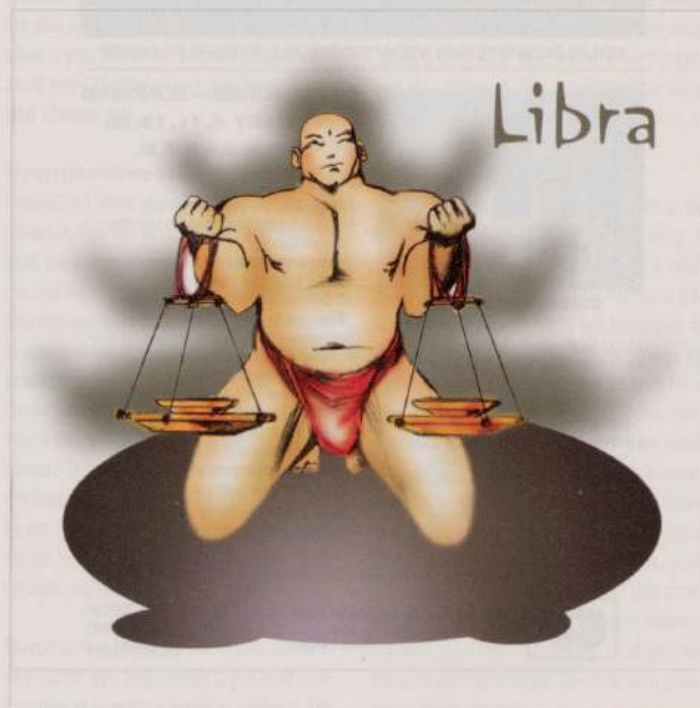
Saturn. You will apply yourself to career evaluation and goal setting. External security is your call to action, and everything else is second in your life. And as long as relationships and friendships feed into this part of your life, you will nurture them. If they don't, you will not be sentimental about your past relationships. This will surprise many people as your inner nature comes to the surface. You are a tough negotiator this year—and seem more interested in a true compromise of win/win rather than the acquiescing that you have done in the past. You can have problems with authority figures or bosses who seem to be in your way. Build your road carefully.

Uranus. Your work and health habits are going to change this year. At work, they are putting in new equipment, changing the way

you and your co-workers have always done things. They could move you to a new location and even change your job title. Your role at work is changing. You do not like feeling that you have to sacrifice for the peace of the office. Health takes on a totally new concept. You are embracing the ideal of improving your lifestyle and not just eating and exercising bet-

own children will be more artistic and sensitive. They may take an interest in spirituality. This is strongest for those of you born October 4-9 and with planets in those degrees.

Pluto. Your logical mind is going through a shift. You are more aware of your articulateness and the impression it has on the



ter. You want more freedom and will eventually let yourself off the hook for everyone's sanity.

Neptune. With this placement, your creative impulses are stimulated much beyond what you are accustomed to. You will be drawn to new ideas about art and beauty. Friends and groups will help bring this out in you. Even in business, you are drawn to associations that help your artistry and promote your gifts. Aptitudes you had as a child will rise to the surface as a part of this activation. Your

people around you. You are better able to express yourself in a direct manner. And it will certainly surprise those around you who are more accustomed to your diplomatic form of expression. You will share more of your metaphysical views with those in your immediate environment. Pluto will also help you to get your life in order by getting rid of the clutter around you and shifting some of your negative personal habits. This will be more significant to those of you born October 12-16 and with planets in those degrees.

scorpio (October 24-November 21)

Jupiter. With Jupiter in your solar 11th house, this is an excellent year for you to increase your participation in groups and social associations. You are very charming during this year, and people want to be around you. It can also be a good time to examine your goals and dreams for the future and to act upon them. You are feeling positive about the future, and your own resistance won't stand in your way. After September, Jupiter enters your solar 12th house of spiritual retreat, meditation, and intuition. Your psychic sensitivities are increased. Being around chaos

and confusion will be harder. You will shy away from these energies as you seek a more peaceful environment. You will also do a lot of spiritual searching during this time, looking for the larger connections between you and the goddess.

Saturn. This year, Saturn is helping you pursue higher education and improve your station in life. You may be taking classes or finding ways to improve your career skills. And you are doing all of this with a sense of

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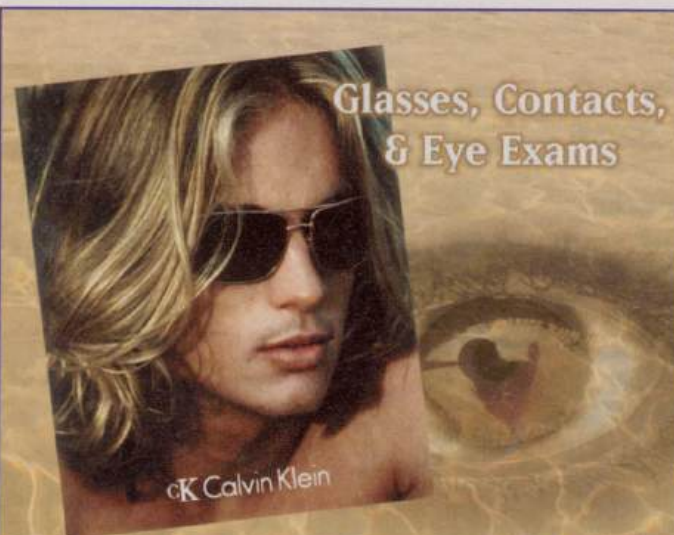
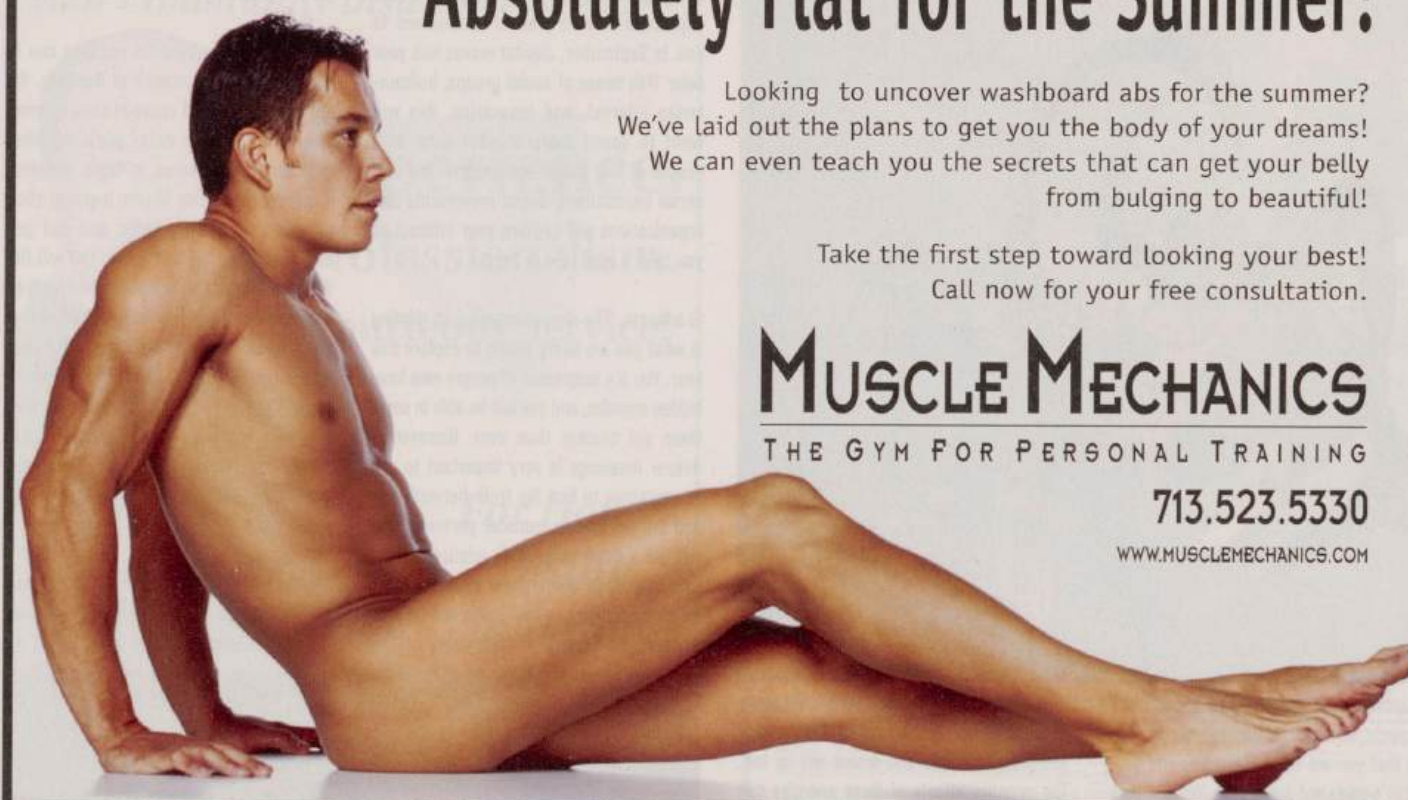
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scorpio

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enthusiasm. You are cheerful about these prospects. In relationships, you are making sure that you are clear about you and your partner's goals and aspirations. You are more open about what your expectations are in your relationship and want to cover things in more detail than your partner is accustomed to. Views that you learned from your childhood are also being examined and will need to be integrated into the present or discarded.

Uranus. Playfulness is a strong theme in many parts of your life. Uranus is certainly making her presence known in this area. If you have children, you want them to be free and to free yourself from their daily rearing. If you are more controlling in this area, then your children will seem rebellious. Or if you are thought of in this way, you will be seen as the rebel. If you take some classes, you may be able to help free your inner self. You are searching for the passion of life that you lost about seven years ago. You will find that missing piece this year.

Neptune. With Neptune's influences on you, you may feel that you are disconnected from your roots and familial impressions. You may want to run away from home to separate from the identity that you have carried

with you for so long. You certainly will need a more peaceful environment to live in. Your tolerance for chaos and drama will be low. The negative effects of these energies can directly affect your health. Old family patterns of sacrifice will be shoved into your face until you are the only person you can rescue. Many will feel that they need more time to themselves. Trips to spas, lakes, or the beach can be very helpful for your psyche. Those affected the most intensely are born November 4-8 or with planets in those degrees.

Pluto. Your ruling planet, Pluto, is helping to revamp your financial situation. You are feeling pressured to pay off bills and get yourself totally out of debt. Mostly you want to regain control of your life and your resources. Some of you are more motivated to develop dormant abilities instead of just relying on those who got you through. One part of this awareness is the understanding that you have not had faith and trust in your own abilities and have chosen a path of safety. Others have seen your talents, but you avoided acting upon them. You were afraid that your talents (you the person) would abandon you (the child). Time to support that part of you. This is strongest for those of you born November 11-15 or with planets in those degrees.

sagittarius (November 22-December 21)

Jupiter. Career and work activities are ever increasing as Jupiter is traveling through your solar 10th house of career,

authority, and the public self. Taking on more work than you can accomplish will be easy. Watch what you agree to do. You will feel

that you can tackle any task set in your path. But it will be so easy to over-commit as that is a natural trait for Sagittarians. And you will be open to really great career opportunities that present themselves to you. In September, Jupiter moves into your solar 11th house of social groups, humanitarian interest, and innovation. You will want to spend more of your time with people of like minds and explore the universal connections. Social movements and organizations will capture your interest as you take a lead role in them.

Saturn. The deeper meaning of relating is what you are being driven to explore this year. You are suspicious of people who have hidden agendas, and you will be able to smell them out quicker than ever. Uncovering deeper meanings is very important to you as you strive to find the truth between you and the people you consider partners. This will put a strain on existing relationships as you take them apart piece by piece. Your tolerance for lying or half-truths will be nonexistent. Be careful. As you judge others,

certainly dramatic changes taking place in your family of origin. Keep in touch, as they will need your courage to change and forget the past.

Neptune. Boredom in routines can be brought on by this transit of Neptune. You are in a dreamy and escapist state of mind. This is not good for detail work, decisions with serious outcomes, or logic. However, it is great for writing fiction, learning about psychic and intuitive skills, and just getting away from the humdrum. You will find that you are getting more information from the people around you than just what they are saying. You are picking up on their thoughts and feelings. Sometimes this can be very oppressive and can make you want to isolate yourself from the outside world. This is more potent for those of your born December 3-8 or with planets in these same locations.

Pluto. Pluto has been in your sign since the late '90s and has slowly been embracing and enveloping all the Sagittarians one



you will be judged in the same way. The problem of shared resources will initially bring all this to the surface. This is not the real issue but the catalyst.

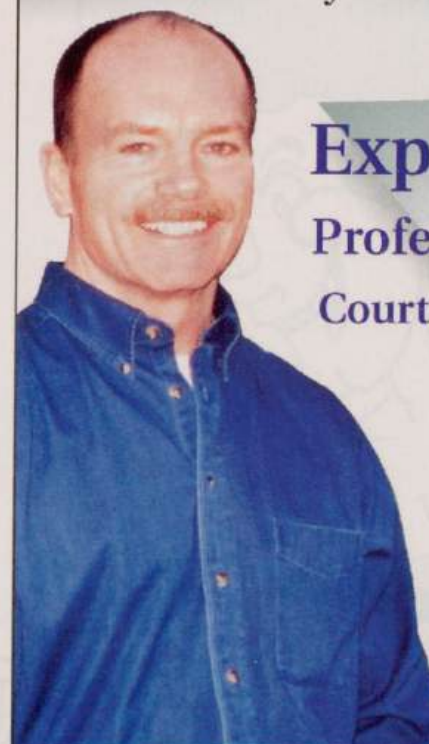
Uranus. Traditions and family ties will be confronted this year. You are no longer motivated by the fears of what you knew and did as a child. This process will undermine your choice about career and put you on a path to find yourself. You will pull away from family roles and may even be seen as unstable. You will want the home you live in to be more open and to have more light. You may move or remodel your home. There are

by one as she slides through your sign until 2008. This year, those of you born December 10-15 and with planets in those degrees will be affected by Pluto's cosmic enema. This is a time of detoxification of the personal self. Some of you will exercise and diet to improve who you are. Some of you will divorce or end relationships that you have tolerated. And still others will end disappointing careers. It is an unsettling time. But it is a time when you regain control of your destiny. You will not run on automatic. The times of the year when this is the most powerful are March, June, September, and December.

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SUPER DUPER

Don't have tickets to the Super Bowl in Houston? Throw a festive bash, one with a queer eye for the sports fan

by Tiffany Penn

Illustration by Keith McCaffety

I used to test my gaydar by asking, "How was the football game yesterday?" I knew I had a sister when his response was, "What game?" But I have caught some of you huddled under the TV in the bar when football is on, and I am worried that one of you may have gotten the idea in your head to host a Super Bowl party.

As a gay man, you had a choice between sports and party planning in grade school. You chose sports, so there is a chance that you will answer the door wearing a rainbow wig and a foam finger. Quick quiz: "Is your silver candelabrum polished?" If you did not answer "Yes," this article could save your gay social life.

The first thing you need is decorations. Don't let your team loyalty throw Thom into a dither when he sees the color

palette he has to work with. Decorate around the team with the best color scheme.

Invite the non-sports fans over to the house a few hours earlier than the other guests. At least one Carson-like friend will whisk you off to the master bedroom to pick out a new outfit and highlight your hair. The other men will take a pile of streamers and balloons and transform your living room into a steamy locker room.

Besides the DJ Samurai soundtrack, your obligation to the Velvet Mafia Booster Club is to have a propane tank, balloons, dry ice, toothpaste (to polish the silver), enough fruit for a Carmen Miranda centerpiece, strands of white lights, and I've never seen a gay man refuse a Tiki torch. A cordless screwdriver, plywood, cotton batting, and 10 yards of fabric will get you new window treatments for the event. Two tablecloths, some empty



shoeboxes, and tea lights create a layered buffet table.

Real food and mixed drinks. Even if you are sure that everyone you know is a gristle-gnawing carnivore, someone *always* brings a vegetarian. There are varying degrees of vegetarian, so you are still going to get it wrong, but at least you tried. Put lentils in the rice pilaf. For the Atkins crowd, roll some cold cuts and cheese and hold the wraps together with an olive and a toothpick. Do not forget to put one of those olives in your martini because a good host would be drunk by now.

A gay party buffet also includes deviled eggs, carved meat, pâté, and cheesecake. Save the cheese balls and corn chips for your coming-out party. We set ourselves apart by the food we eat at parties and the people we sit next to on the couch. Think about it. Do you really want to watch as a woman licks her fingers? It sounds very sexy when your sexual persuasion is in the room, but as a gay man, if you are inviting women, you will want to stay away from finger foods.

The cooler with three kinds of beer in it will come in handy for the Super Bowl Drinking Game, but you still need to have

two bottles of vodka and a bottle each of bourbon and rum. The problem with gin and Scotch is that you have to buy good gin and Scotch, and people who drink good gin and Scotch probably don't hang out with sports freaks like you anyway. Pinot Gris is the popular wine these days, so pick up a big bottle of that, too. Don't try to pronounce it. Just say, "There is wine in the fridge."

Super Bowl commercials are the best.

Have plenty of activities to keep people occupied until the third-down conversion. Watching football is a lot like watching a car race. You are always waiting for the touchdown or the crash. So I think a drinking game is in order:

- Drink when the person singing the national anthem cracks on the high note and two drinks if they avoid it all together by harmonizing an octave lower.
- Drink once when Celine Dion is the soundtrack for a commercial (you will be drunk by halftime).
- Drink every time the receiver slaps the quarterback's butt as he runs by before the snap.
- Drink and giggle every time announcers refer to the "tight end."
- Drink each time they show the player's wife talking to her neighbor and not paying attention to the game. Drink twice if she is talking to her husband's gay lover.
- Drink once for each firework cannon ignited during the halftime pyrotechnic display.
- Drink every time people at your party high-five. Take two drinks if the women try to high-five and miss.
- Take a shot if an advertisement airs for a figure-skating competition.

You could throw a towel party. Just be prepared if anyone from the Houston Area Bears is on your invite list. He really will show up in *only* a towel (God love 'em!).

Here is my point: A Super Bowl party must have a gimmick to get gay people to "come out," and having guests over on February 1 to help you repack your Christmas decorations and finally throw out the tree is a cruel and evil plan that only sad and lonely people fall for. So our new gaydar question is, "What did you serve at your Super Bowl party?" When he says, "Caviar and goose liver pâté," ask him when his coming out party is and offer to bring the cheese ball.

Tiffany Penn, a standup comedian, won the Imperial Court of Houston Space City Idol competition in October.

Just Say the Word

Ilene Chaiken chats about her new Showtime series *The L Word*, premiering this month • by Olivia Flores Alvarez

Finally! A television series about lesbians created and produced by lesbians, on a major network.

The L Word creator, screenwriter, and producer Ilene Chaiken drew on her own experience as a lesbian and mother for the show's premise. Chaiken recently spoke to me by phone, discussing the show's spectacular cast, bright future, and long road to the screen.

Despite the fact that she was once again answering the same questions she's been answering for the last several months as the Showtime publicity machine geared up for *The L Word*'s January 18 unveiling,

Chaiken was unfailingly patient and attentive, speaking in a slow, deliberate style that seems unlikely for a Hollywood player capable of single-handedly pushing television beyond its comfort zone.

With over 15 years as a writer and several successful film projects to her credit, Chaiken is no show-business novice. She has a solid résumé, which includes screenwriting duties for the 2002 Laura Dern vehicle *Damaged Care* and the 2000 made-for-cable *Dirty Pictures* with James Woods. The Pamela Anderson film *Barb Wire* was taken from a Chaiken story, and in 1988 she was associate producer for *Satisfaction* with Deborah Harry and Julia Roberts (in her film debut).

But Showtime still passed on *The L Word* a few years ago when Chaiken first approached them. The success of such shows as *Queer as Folk* and to a lesser extent *Will and Grace* helped to convince the network to take another look at the idea, and after a second pitch session, Showtime finally gave Chaiken the green light. "It's brave [of Showtime to produce the show], yes, but it's sensible, too. There's an audience for this," she says. "I think lots of people will be watching—not just lesbians. This is a show about relationships, about love and friends. Those aren't just lesbian topics. And after the success of *Queer as Folk*, it was easier to imagine that this show would find an audience."

Early in the production, the show was called *Earthlings*, a title that didn't seem to have anything to do with lesbians. The name was supposedly a reference to the common practice of asking, "Is she an earthling? Has she been to the planet?" as

a way to determine if someone was a lesbian. That explanation made little sense to those who heard it until they were told the planet in question was actually The Planet, a West Los Angeles coffee bar owned by one of the show's characters and frequented by lesbians.

But the moniker was cumbersome and required too much explanation. After an informal naming contest and several brainstorming sessions, Chaiken and other production personnel came up with *The L Word*. "I like it," Chaiken says. "We needed something that everyone could understand, something that described the tone of the show."

The L Word centers on Bette (Jennifer Beals) and Tina (Laurel Holloman), a stable couple trying to have a baby. Bette clearly loves her partner, but she's quick to bark orders and is more than a little inconvenienced by the inefficient—and ultimately ineffective—efforts to get Tina pregnant. The quest puts them at odds and sends the couple to therapy where Bette continues her "take charge, not prisoners" tactics.

Their circle of friends includes Dana (Erin Daniels), a closeted tennis pro frustrated by her lack of a love life; Alice (rocker Leisha Hailey), a bisexual journalist who is amused by if not completely happy with her life; and Shane (Katherine Moennig), an edgy, liberated girl-de-jour with a different bedmate every night.

Jenny (Mia Kirshner), a young writer fresh from college, and her fiancé Tim (Eric Mabius), a swim coach, move next door to Bette and Tina. Jenny quickly begins an affair with Marina (Karina Lombard), the owner of the coffee bar that Bette and her friends visit. While simultaneously falling in love and falling apart, Jenny betrays Tim, who is charming but completely clueless.

Rounding out the cast is Kit (Pam Grier), Bette's half sister, a one-time singer who is constantly on the verge of a comeback. Grier's character was reportedly reworked from a dread-head thug to a →



The cast of *The L Word*: (back row) Mia Kirshner, Eric Mabius, Laurel Holloman, Karina Lombard, Pam Grier, Erin Daniels; (front row) Katherine Moennig, Jennifer Beals, Leisha Hailey.

Ilene Chaiken on the set of *The L Word*.

CHAIKEN: COURTESY OF SHOWTIME
CAST: MATTHEW ROLSTON/SHOWTIME

more attractive, if slightly drunk, musician with a high cool factor.

Anne Archer, Rosanna Arquette, Holland Taylor, Lolita Davidovich, Ossie Davis, and Snoop Dogg have all been tapped as guest stars for future episodes.

Chaiken, like viewers, is impressed with the assemblage of actors. "It's such an honor to work with a cast of that level," she says. "It's a great cast, a dream cast really. Jennifer Beals, Pam Grier, everyone on the show is just great."

The L Word's two-hour pilot is an extended game of "who would squirt into a jar for you?" as Tina and Bette try to find a suitable sperm donor to father their baby.

Chaiken's script is smart and quick and does an excellent job of introducing the nine characters without becoming bogged down or complicated. Beals has called the show "*Sex and the City* where the women sleep with each other." Actually, it's more than that. Like *Sex*, *The L Word* examines sexual and social mores. Unlike *Sex*, much of what we see on *The L Word*—women loving women, living together as married partners and raising their own children in openly lesbian households—is still illegal in a majority of states.

The fact that women who are doing in real life what Beals and her costars do on screen and are the targets of hate crimes and hate-based legislation makes *The L Word* groundbreaking, not just hip.

"I put a lot of my own experiences into the show, but I wouldn't say this is my story," Chaiken says. "[My partner Miggi Hood] and I have twin daughters, and Bette and Tina are trying to have a baby, but what happens to them isn't exactly what happened to us. One day I looked around and saw that our situation wasn't unique, that there were lots of lesbian women who were going through the same thing, trying to build a life and raise children. That gave me the idea of a show, but I wanted one with characters that were more real, more like the women I knew than some Hollywood version of us."

While the pilot is outstanding and there is every expectation that the rest of the series will only improve, there are a couple of moments that go clunk. When Tina and Bette meet a hot young artist and decide he would be the perfect sperm donor, the pair entices him to their bed with the promise of a three-way. The plan backfires when the intended donor figures out their game and storms out in a huff, accusing the couple of trying to steal his sperm.

And some scenes are unintentionally humorous. At an OB-GYN office, Tina is inseminated with some donor sperm. As the doctor leaves the room, she tells Bette that

LIKE L

On January 18, the Human Rights Campaign and Showtime will host a premiere party for *The L Word* at Meteor. The evening will kick off at 6 p.m., followed by the 8 p.m. broadcast. HRC will give away *L Word* merchandise throughout the event, which is open to the public at no charge.

L WORD AT SEA

Olivia, the women's vacation line, will launch a Mexican Riviera cruise on January 16 featuring a premiere screening of *The L Word* featuring some of the program cast as well the first Women's Leadership Summit. See page 80.

Leisha Hailey (l) and Jennifer Beals



even chunky." The cast, while extremely talented and engaging, fails to reflect the variety of colors, styles, and sizes of real lesbians. The two characters portrayed by Grier and Beals are the only nonwhites. None of the women approach real androgyny, much less masculinity. Even Shane, who Dana regularly accuses of dressing like a man, is polished and punk-model perfect.

Will the "everyone is white and beautiful" setup play with *The L Word* viewers? Chances are yes. The lack of minority or plus-size characters didn't seem to affect *Friends* or *Sex and the City*, two shows that, like *The L Word*, feature young, hip ensemble casts.

Even if viewers don't see themselves on screen, they will surely hear themselves in Chaiken's quick, smart dialogue. The clearly defined characters have personalities that will mirror real-life women. From bossy and beautiful to happy-on-the-sidelines to "can't keep my pants on" and young enough not to care, these are women that most lesbians either are or know.

One-liners like "lesbians think friendship is another word for foreplay" litter the script. Dana and Alice, for example, spend much of their time together analyzing why other lesbians seem to have such an easy time finding and seducing beautiful women. Their friend Shane, with her unending line of one-liners, is a favorite target. First, they attribute Shane's success to her "bush confidence" and then to her "nipple confidence." The pair agrees that the secret is Shane's attitude. But Dana contends she has plenty of attitude, albeit cranky and ill humored, but attitude nonetheless.

The two also play "six degrees of sexual separation" as they chart out the tangled web of ex-lovers and their subsequent partners. Their banter is fun, relaxed, and makes for some of the most genuine moments of the pilot.

Unfortunately, the show reinforces at least one stereotype—lesbians recruit. When coffee bar owner Marina meets Jenny, she chases her despite the fact that Jenny's fiancé Tim is standing nearby. Later, when the two begin an affair, Marina is completely unmoved by Tim's fiancé status while Jenny is so overcome with guilt that she runs home and gives her unsuspecting boyfriend a surprise blow job.

Complicated, messy, funny, difficult, and crammed full of zinging one-liners that people mutter mostly to entertain themselves, *The L Word* is just like real life—just with better lighting.

Olivia Flores Alvarez writes regularly about the arts for the magazine.

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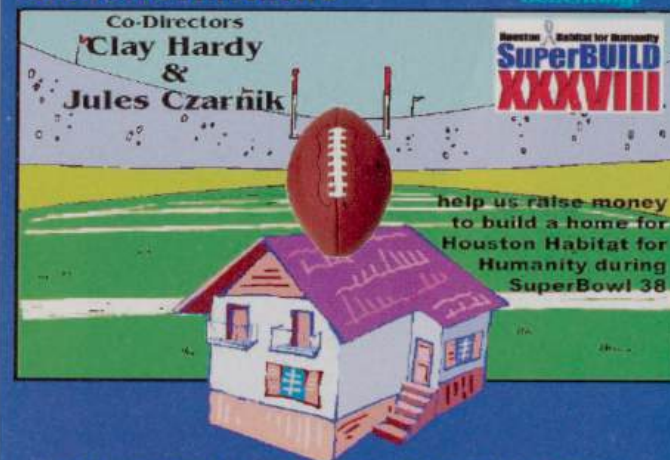
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RAIL LOVE. On January 1, the train arrives. After decades of bootless debate over mass transit, light rail debuts in Houston. Montrose queers can hop on in Midtown for points south and north, including downtown nightspots. We eagerly await the first sighting of a drag queen riding the rails on her way to a show at Rich's.



from BCCM productions support the Center for AIDS.

GOOD WORKS. On January 24, the fundraising nobles of the Royal Sovereign and Imperial Court of the Single Star will announce new monarchs during Coronation XX. At the event at Sheraton Suites Houston, Emperor XIX **Ronnie Siebert** and Empress XIX **SoFonda St. John Lust** will conclude their reign. Check out www.rsicss.org for the weekend schedule, which includes the January 25 "Stud Muffins/

Divas Party and Victory Show" at Keys West. **Woody Stiner** is RSICSS board president.

Make your voice heard: Voting for RSICSS emperor and empress is open to the community. Cast your ballot January 12, 6-9 p.m., at Meteor or January 17, noon-4 p.m., at the Assistance Fund.

Our town's other charity-minded regal eagles, the Imperial Court of Houston-Space City Empire, crowned the new Apollo Emperor **Keith Vyvial** and Gemini Empress **Jessica Van Shelton** on October 4. Previous ICOH emperor **Sean Carter** is now empire chairman.

Through frequent club shows, both groups garner the green each month for good causes. Among many charitable events this month, RSICSS will host Drag Queen Bingo at Meteor on January 13 and 20, raising money for the Assistance Fund. On January 10, ICOH's **Eartha Quake** and **Lloyd Powell** will present "Blue-Haired Ladies on Gin," a benefit at EJ's for the PWA Coalition and Montrose Clinic HIV and Hepatitis C testing and counseling programs.

Across the community, events planners rack their gray matter for clever, attention-grabbing names for their galas, benefits,

and extravaganzas ("Girl, give me a better rhyme for wig"). It's brain-draining work. Last month, I bollixed the especially smart moniker for the March 20 Human Rights Campaign gala. The theme is the punning "Garden of Even."

IN YOUR NEIGHBORHOOD. Over at the Houston GLBT Community Center, **Anita Hoffpauir** now directs the popular Lesbian Film Night on the fourth Friday of every month. The January 24 movie is *When Night Is Falling*.

Speaking of coming out, the center continues the long-running Tuesday evening support group for women at all stages of the closet-opening process. Gals also flock to Women's Game Night on the second Friday of the month. **Nancey McCarty** and **Amanda Williams** are the game mavens.

Now you have another reason to hop the Main train after dark and head downtown: **Eduardo Elizondo** has launched gay nights on Thursdays at Pearl, a gleaming new night-spot in the club district. Elizondo reports that he wants to make many of these evenings fundraisers for community causes.

To observe the start of Chinese New Year, Shanghai River will present the annual dragon dance on January 22, 23, and 24. **David** and **Sanne Wang** own this community fave spot.

On the Island, **Misty Valdez** will host the January 10 kickoff party for her annual AIDS benefit at the historic, reopened Balinese Room. **Kofi** will emcee, and performers will include **Stefanie Diamond**, **Cassie Nicole**, and Valdez.

Mark your calendars: On February 6, **Howard Michael**, the great gay poet, will star as the featured reader at the First Friday reading at Inprint House on Sul Ross. With any luck, you will hear his trenchant and funny "The Ballad of the Fat and the Femme." ■

ON THE AIR. This month, **Jimmy Carper** and the gang at *After Hours*, the wee-hours weekly show on KPFT, continue their series of live broadcasts. **Michael Williams** is organizing this Face for Radio Tour, which marks the 16th anniversary of the program. The fun starts at midnight Sunday and continues through 2 a.m. on January 3 at Katz's Deli, on January 10 at Meteor, and on January 17 at Guava Lamp.

Come January 15, **Ernie Manouse** will debut a new series on KUHT, the PBS station. Called *InnervIEWS*, the program will air every Thursday at 10 p.m. **Anne Rice**, *Vampire Chronicles* author and mother of gay writer **Christopher Rice**, takes the guest chair. Other guests this month include Broadway star **Ben Vereen** on January 22.

LOVE IT. On January 26, Bayou City Concert Musicals will present an encore performance of *She Loves Me* at the Hobby Center. **Paul Hope** and **David Thome** direct. In our October issue, arts scribe **D.L. Groover** raved about the original September run: "These concert versions are the pinnacle of musical-comedy theater." Bonus: Proceeds

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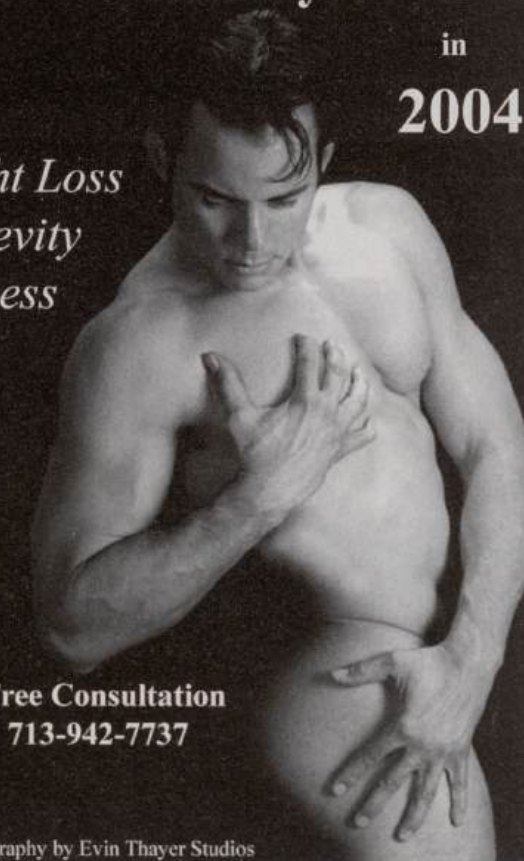
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Bishop V. Gene Robinson

(The Advocate, 12/23/03, Bruce C. Steele and John Caldwell)

The Advocate: When you talk about people on the edges, I automatically think of gay people.

Bishop V. Gene Robinson: Absolutely. But it's more than just gay people. Three days after my election I got a letter from a woman in the state prison here who wrote, "I am neither gay nor Christian, but your election makes me think there might be a community out there who could love me despite what I've done." I went down and played softball with the women at that prison, and I met this young woman. She turned out to be 18 years old. She looked about 15—very quiet, shy, sort of a wallflower. She had killed her mother when she was 14, yet she saw hope for herself in my election.

Dominick Dunne

(Vanity Fair, 1/04, Dominick Dunne)

The wedding [of Liza Minnelli and David Gest] was one of the great sustained camp events of the decade. . . . After the minister pronounced the bride and groom man and wife, they tongue-kissed for what seemed like an hour and a half. I know a fake kiss when I see one, and all I kept thinking of was their breath, rather than any sexual stirrings in their loins. Later, Michael Musto, the gossip columnist for *The Village Voice*, wrote that my "appearance at the wedding cemented it as a crime scene."

Christopher Sieber

(TV Guide, 12/13/03, Janet Weeks)

It's All Relative has become one of the few new successful sitcoms of the season, despite a controversial premise [a young woman with two snooty gay dads marries a hunk whose father is a little to the right of Archie Bunker]. And people naturally want to know the answer to the most predictable question. Sieber's response: Yep, I'm gay. . . .

Now he's only worried that he'll be seen as a gay crusader. "People might think I am making it a big deal," he says, shrugging. "It's not a big deal. I'm so comfortable, I'm fine."

Christine Champagne

(Out, 1/04)

While my mother knows I'm a lesbian, only recently she asked me, her voice brimming with hope, "Do you think you might pull an Ann Heche someday?" No, I won't, but I must credit my mother for adding a new phrase to the language.

Sir Ian McKellen

(BBC News, 11/14/03)

When Sir Ian McKellen was lobbying then Home Secretary Michael Howard about the controversial Section 28, which forbids the promotion of homosexuality in schools, Mr. Howard asked for the actor's autograph for his children. With a smile on his face, but with his lobbying having failed, McKellen says he wrote: "F--k off, I'm gay."

Jennifer Beals

(Out, 1/04, Lisa Kennedy)

"This older guy [a journalist] asked me, 'So, are you having a relationship with someone on [Showtime's new series *The L Word*]?' . . . 'Me or my character?' asked Beals, who's been married for five years to a film technician named Ken. "He said, 'No, you.'"

Beals went Socratic on him. "When was the last time *you* slept with someone?" she asked. "Who was it, what was it like, was it good?" She then told him, "If I were George Clooney, and Catherine Zeta-Jones was standing next to me, you wouldn't ask me if I'd had an affair with her. Because it's a gay-themed show, you find it salacious. In your older, heterosexual male mind, you think it's OK to ask me that question."

Queer Quotes

Compiled by Blase DiStefano

Jennifer Beals (seen here on the new Showtime series *The L Word*): Is she sleeping with one of her costars?



Bette Midler

(The Advocate, 12/23/03, Frank DeCaro)

Frank DeCaro: [I]n the age of Britney and Christina, are you still a gay icon?

Bette Midler: More than ever! I always say I opened the door for tasteless singers with big tits, and don't you ever forget it! But do they ever write or call or say thank you to me? No. Would you ever go on an awards show and kiss those two the way Madonna did?

I'm sorry, not to insult your "lesbianic" readership, but ew! It seemed really desperate.

I'm glad you said that, but that word didn't come from my lips.

Bette Midler (pictured here from 1991's *For the Boys*): Is she gonna kiss Britney or Christina?



ALAN AND TOMMY TAKE A TRIP

And what a journey it is!



Los Angeles, 1971, two years after Stonewall: Alan (Larry Sullivan) is a conservative and deeply closeted young journalist who meets Tommy (Steve Braun), an openly-gay free spirit with radical politics, long hair, and a flamboyant best friend (Alexis Arquette). Even as he's writing articles against homosexuality, Alan falls in love with the attractive activist.

Fast-forward to 1977 when the gay community is first flexing its political muscle over the attacks of Anita Bryant. Alan and Tommy are now openly lovers and gay activists, but when Alan's old antigay writings mysteriously resurface, he is fired from his job, and Tommy leaves in anger and shame.

Seven years later, Reaganism is in full bloom, and Alan is living in the mansion—and bed—of a powerful, closeted businessman (Ray Baker). Alan's mother (Jill St. John) and old girlfriend (Sirena Irwin) tell him that Tommy is in Mexico and dying of AIDS. Alan rushes to his side and tries to bring him home, but when the airline refuses to let Tommy board the plane, the two men find a car and begin their final trip together.

The Trip, a 2002 film directed by Miles Swain, is available at www.tlvideo.com. From TLA Releasing (www.tlareleasing.com). For more information, visit www.thetrip-themovie.com.

—Troy Carrington



Alan (Larry Sullivan, l) and Tommy (Steve Braun) get it on in *The Trip*.

MORE DVD/VHS PREVIEWS

Children of Hannibal



Hapless Domenico (Silvio Orlando) decides to start a new life by robbing a bank and fleeing to Switzerland. But things go wrong, and he finds himself with a hostage, businessman Tommaso (Diego Abatantuono), who is as eager to leave Italy as he is. Tommaso convinces Domenico to head south, where a friend will help them sail to Egypt, but the friend (Flavio Insinna) turns out to be a policeman... and Tommaso's secret gay lover. To complicate matters, Tommaso's adult daughter (Valentina Cervi) suddenly appears, determined to join them. New mishaps befall the gang with each passing mile, creating a lively road comedy that revels in the changing Italian landscape

and offers some of the best and most unusual gay characters ever seen in an Italian film. • *Variety* says *Children of Hannibal* is a "warm-hearted tale [that] has spontaneity and wit all too rare in Italian comedies." • 1998. Directed by Davide Ferrario. Italian with English subtitles. Available at www.tlvideo.com. From TLA Releasing (www.tlareleasing.com). —Suzie Lynde

Coming Out Party



Coming Out Party is a celebration of love, life, and freedom as seven gay men and lesbian comic storytellers share their personal stories of coming out to family, friends, and coworkers, and living out and proud. Features Jackie Beat, Rene Hicks, Sabrina Matthews, Dan Renzi, John Riggi, Bob

Smith, and Terry Sweeney. Their insights about gay culture will make you laugh out loud, their experiences of first loves and heartaches might move you to tears, and their honesty will inspire you. • DVD format only (www.comingoutpartydvd.com). 2003. From Creative Light Entertainment (www.crlight.com). —SL

Luster



The film opens with Jackson (Justin Herwick) waking up in a sea of bodies after an all-night orgy. He thinks he has just found true love with Billy (Jonah Blechman), but Billy has a twisted sexual appetite and just wants to be friends. At the same time, a hunky cousin →

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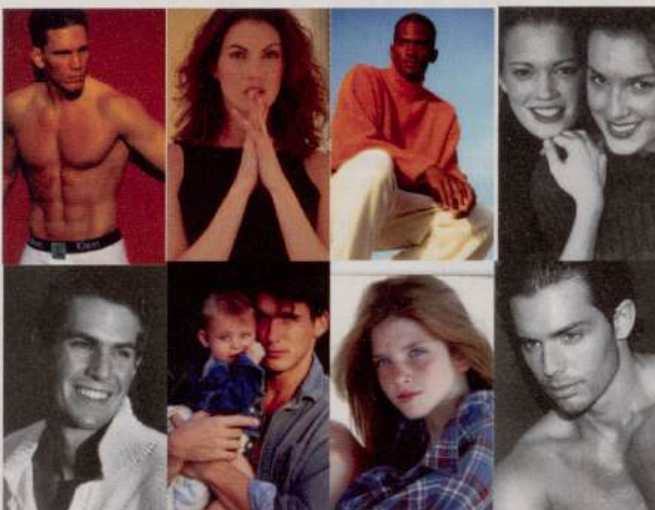


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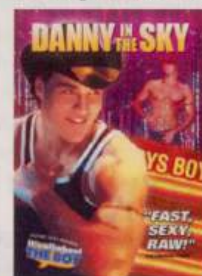
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DVD/VHS continued from page 58

(B. Wyatt) arrives, a cousin that Jackson didn't even know he had. Jackson wonders if sex with a cousin is incest if it's gay. Complicating matters are a straight-acting guy (Sean Thibodeau) who's infatuated with Jackson; his best friend and boss (Shane Powers) who is so fond of Jackson that he questions his straightness; a lesbian friend (Pamela Gidley) who is fascinated with the cousin to the dismay of her partner (Susanna Melvoin); and a closeted rock star (Willie Garson, Carrie's gay friend in *Sex and the City*) who wants Jackson to ghost-write his lyrics. Eventually everyone gets sorted out in a surprisingly charming, though occasionally heartbreaking, ode to artistic temperament and the search for love amid lust. • 2002. Directed by Everett Lewis. Available at www.tlavideo.com. From TLA Releasing (www.tlareleasing.com). —TC

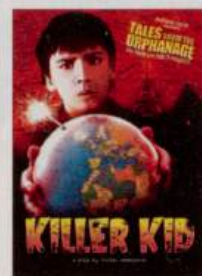
Danny in the Sky



Newcomer Thierry Pepin plays Danny, the son of a closeted father and supermodel mother, who died of an overdose when Danny was a child. When Danny comes of age, against his father's wishes, he too pursues modeling, but all-too-quickly falls prey to the fashion world's dark side. He

becomes vain, then ruthlessly competitive. He starts abusing drugs. Falling into depression and disillusionment, he perverts modeling into exhibitionism by becoming a stripper and lap dancer. In what becomes a completely futile search for self, he dabbles in porn. In this jaded netherworld, far from the glamorous runways where he started, Danny finds love with Karine, a photographer just as lost as he is. But this affair can only be temporary, as Danny's final destiny still awaits him. • 2001. Directed by Denis Langlois. French with English subtitles (DVD has English-dubbed version). From Picture This! Entertainment (www.picturethisent.com). —TC

Killer Kid



The darkly prescient Killer Kid tells the story of Djilali (Teufik Jallab), an orphan from Lebanon, whose father was killed by Israelis. Preying on his rage, terrorists recruit the boy and train him to be an assassin. They teach him to shoot, fight, hate, and be a soldier. And Djilali is an exceptional

student. He is smart, cunning, and with the terrorists' help, willing to kill in cold blood. When he goes to Paris to assassinate the French president, Djilali is introduced to Karim (Younesse Boudache), a poor boy from the Arab section of the city who is being used to help Djilali assimilate. Karim knows nothing of terrorism; his interests are those of most boys his age: rap music, skateboarding, and 16-year-old girls. The boys become close, vowing to remain friends "dead or alive." But eventually Djilali must choose between executing his mission and saving the life of his friend. • DVD format only. 1994. Directed by Gilles de Maistre. French with English subtitles. From Picture This! Entertainment (www.picturethisent.com). —TC

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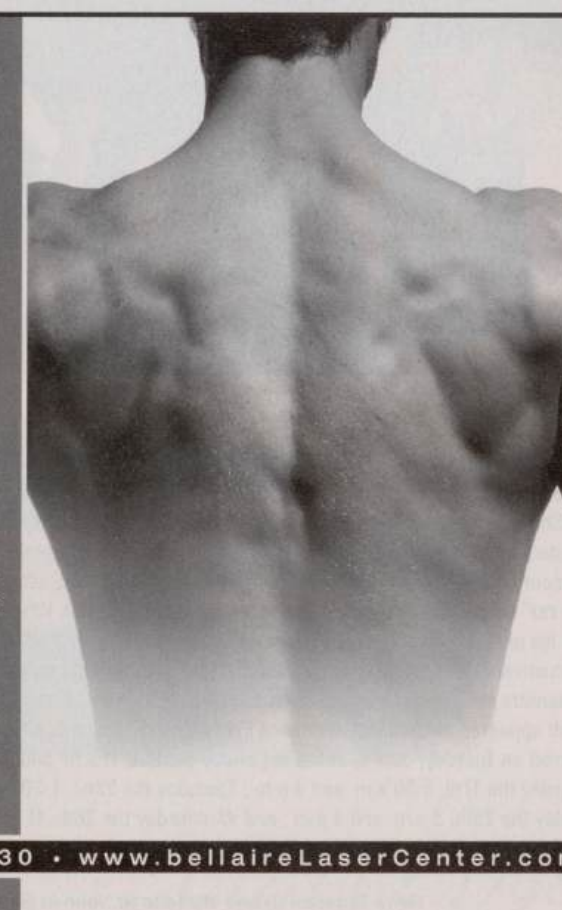
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GOODBYE AGAIN

The Goodbye Girl's gay subplot will have you fuming . . . we mean flaming

Jeff Daniels and Patricia Heaton star in this dramedy that explores the growing relationship between an aspiring actor and a divorcee who become unwilling tenants in the same New York City apartment. *The Goodbye Girl* is a remake of the 1977 Neil Simon film that starred Richard Dreyfuss (who won a Best Actor Oscar for his role) and Marsha Mason (who was nominated for Best Actress). This new TNT original production, directed by Richard Benjamin, also has Simon involved, this time as executive producer and writer.

If the romance between the two main characters is the "drama" part of this dramedy, the gay subplot is the "comedy." Daniels' character is cast in an off-off-Broadway production of Shakespeare's *Richard III*. The director is Mark Bodine, played to perfection by Alan Cumming. Bodine wants Elliot (Daniels) to play Richard as a flaming queen, but Elliot is appalled at the idea and wants to play him as it was intended—with a hump and a crippled arm. A compromise is reached: Elliot plays Richard as a flaming queen with a hump and a crippled arm.

To imagine yourself being wooed by Daniels might be reason enough to watch *The Goodbye Girl*, but to see Daniels go limp (with his wrist) is an added attraction. Cumming is the icing on the cake.

The Goodbye Girl premieres as a TNT three-play weekend, Friday–Sunday, January 16–18, at 7 p.m. (If you want to see the 1977 film before viewing its remake, TNT is airing it on Thursday, January 15 at 7 p.m.; TCM will air it the same evening at 9 p.m.) —Blase DiStefano

Jeff Daniels (l) and Alan Cumming go gay in *Goodbye*.
INSET (from top left): Patricia Heaton, Hallie Kate Eisenberg; Neil Simon, Richard Benjamin, and Daniels.



DANIELS/CUMMING: BRUCE MACAULAY; GROUP: KEN REGAN; FANCYDANCING: COURTESY SUNDANCE CHANNEL

The Business of Fancydancing

Noted for his novels about the Native-American experience, writer Sherman Alexie follows the success of *Smoke Signals* (1998) with his directorial debut. The focus of this fragmented, semi-autobiographical tale is Seymour Polatkin (Evan Adams), a gay Native-American poet, who returns to "the rez" following the death of one of his childhood buddies. When reunited with his past, Seymour must confront a heritage of anger and self-destructiveness no less challenging than the misunderstandings he encounters in contemporary white society. *The Business of Fancydancing*, which appeared at the 2002 Sundance Film Festival, airs on Sundance Channel on Tuesday, Jan. 6, at 8 p.m.; Friday the 9th, 11 a.m. and 6 p.m.; Saturday the 17th, 5:30 a.m. and 4 p.m.; Thursday the 22nd, 1:30 p.m.; Sunday the 25th, 5 a.m. and 5 p.m.; and Wednesday the 28th, 11 a.m. and 11:45 p.m. To confirm schedule: www.sundancechannel.com. —Suzie Lynde

Gene Tagaban (l) and Michelle St. John in *Fancydancing*.



OPPOSITE PAGE: BROTHERHOOD: COURTESY HERE! PAY-PER-VIEW; RIVERS: COURTESY E! ENTERTAINMENT TELEVISION

The Brotherhood 2: Young Warlocks. At an exclusive private school, three friends are the outcasts of their class. Constantly in trouble with the school, bullied by other students, and never getting the girls they want, they long to be in with the in-crowd. When a new student, the mysterious and good-looking Luc arrives on campus, they are given the chance to transform their lives. Luc initiates the three friends in a warlock ritual; in return, they gain the popularity and respect they never dreamed possible. After watching his friends commit a series of crimes, the third friend starts to figure out that Luc is after something much more from him and his friends—he's after their souls. • This is not really a "gay" film; however, it is



extremely homoerotic. • The television broadcast of *The Brotherhood 2: Young Warlocks* airs on DIRECTV Channel 170, here! Pay-Per-View (www.hereppv.com). Held over in January: *P.S. Your Cat Is Dead* with Steve Guttenberg and *Friends and Family*. —Troy Carrington



The Red Carpet. Who's wearing who? Who's schmoozing who? It's the ultimate celebrity coverage of the Golden Globes, live from the red carpet, with Joan Rivers (pictured) and her daughter Melissa. Starts at 5 p.m. on Sunday, January 25, on E! (www.eonline.com). —BD

Interview with Anne Rice. Author and "Mistress of the Macabre" Anne Rice joins Houston's own Ernie Manouse to bring forth her thoughts on religion and the supernatural. Rice also talks about her final volume in *The Vampire Chronicles*, her literary practice, Elton John's musical *Lestat*, and the back-story on how she created her own vampire lore. Airs Thursday, January 15, at 10 p.m. on PBS (Channel 8, KUHT-TV). • **InnerVIEWS** is a new show with Manouse airing Thursdays at 10 p.m. on PBS (www.pbs.org). January 22 is Ben Vereen, and January 29 is Nellie Connolly (a former first lady of Texas). —SL ■

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Out in the Arts

by D.L. Groover



Bat Boy star
Scott Sowinski

Takin' a Bite Outta Love. The off-Broadway cult musical hit *Bat Boy* joyously swoops into Stages Repertory Theatre, and there's no need to wave your arms over your head for protection. It burrows right under your skin in the most infectious way possible. When it's over, you feel like flying.

This camp musical romp, written by **Keythe Farley** and **Brian Flemming**, with ingenious music and lyrics by **Laurence O'Keefe**, based upon those bogus "news" articles in the equally camp supermarket rag *Weekly World News*, is the spirited Pygmalion-like story of a half boy/half bat found in the caves of West Virginia. Brought up by the sensitive wife of the local veterinarian, little bat boy soon outclasses the yahoos and falls in love with the doctor's daughter. What can't be taught out of him, however, is his pedigree. His taste for blood is cause for alarm, and this classic outsider is soon blamed for all the town's woes, as well as provoking the doctor's jealousy over the motherly affections of his alienated wife.

This trailer-trash *My Fair Lady* has sniping references to Jerry Springer and Oprah and even *Shane*, and yet there's room in this goofy spoof for it to be read as a

parable of AIDS. This subtle undercurrent gives *Bat Boy* needed heft and much more heart than simple parody. The musical's main message that even freaks need love, or "don't deny your beast inside," is pure Hallmark, but the telling of it is hip and cool Charles Addams.

The entire production—sharp as a fang and slick as a pool of blood—has magnificent vigor due to the exemplary cast and the prickly direction of New York theater import, director **Brian Jucha**. He gives the show true Broadway moxie. From the very first image of spelunkers descending by ropes from the flies, we know we're in professional, capable, and loving hands. We're in for a ride, and Jucha pulls out all the staging tricks to keep us tapping our toes and smiling at all the cleverness.

The ensemble performers are above reproach. As *Bat Boy*, **Scott Sowinski**—another Broadway import—raises the bar. His performance, assured and polished, gleams. It's riveting, full of showbiz know-how and a textbook case in how to hold an audience. **Kara Greenberg**, now living in L.A., returns to Houston for this engagement, and it's about time. It's wonderful to once more see (and hear) her own professional magic

in the Donna Reed-with-an-edge role of doctor's wife. In his Stages debut, **Ben Grimes** brings a punk muscular attitude to the daughter's low-rent boyfriend, and we hope he stays in town—he's a natural, a musical's best friend. **Jonathan McVay**, last seen in Theatre LaB's hilarious *Top Gun! The Musical*, fleshes out his local-yokel diptych of Bud and Daisy to perfection and then gets to stop the show as an ithyphallic Pan in the jubilantly obscene "Children, Children." **David L.J. George**, as both bosomy country mama and gospel-wailing evangelist, huffs and puffs with the best of them, while **Brandon Peters** chills blood as the demented doctor. **Erin Simpson** seems more farmer's daughter than doctor's, and her edgy voice is not helped by the overly insistent amplification.

Someone please tell me: In Stages' Yeager Theater, the size of a Christmas cookie tin, why amplify? You could easily take away the Madonna microphones from the exemplary cast, and no one would notice. They all belt

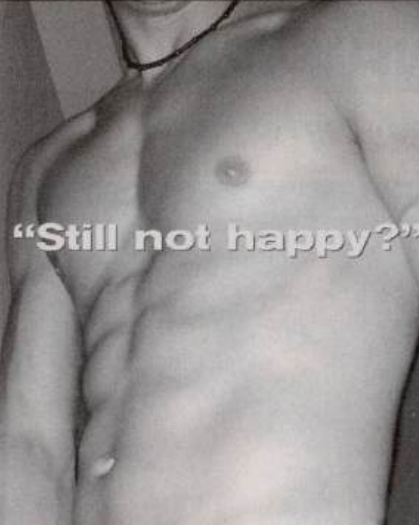
their lungs out anyway, with voices carrying all the way out to Waugh. They don't need electronic help. It adds an extraneous shrill layer that's not needed—or wanted.

Bat Boy (through January 11) is an exemplar of contemporary musical theater. It shows what this much-decried form of entertainment is capable of. Though the show is not sung completely through, the music carries the plot forward, not the dialogue. Great hunks of exposition are described through songs. That's what made *Oklahoma* so famous for its time—although everybody conveniently forgot all those preceding, old-fashioned operettas and grand Hollywood musicals that did exactly the same thing. And the music and lyrics of O'Keefe are grand indeed, covering the bases from gospel to rap to soaring anthems. It's all easy, splendid listening.

Granted, *Bat Boy* is no *Oklahoma*, or even *Rent*, but there's life, wicked humor, a cool sensibility, loads of laughs, and a big sloppy heart in it. Once it gets its teeth in you, it won't let go. For that it should be celebrated—and, more importantly, seen.

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

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GrooveOut

by Gregg Shapiro

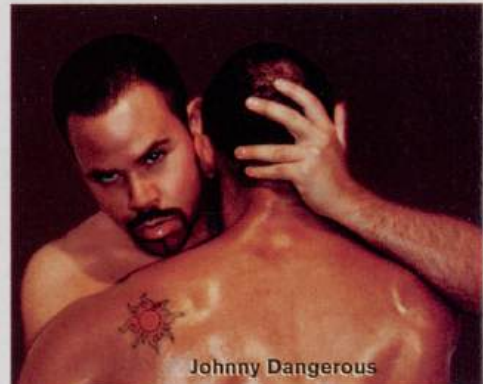
SING IN THE NEW YEAR

Queer artists keep making great music

As the year dawns, I must admit to being amazed at the number of CDs released by LGBT artists in 2003. Including the discs in the column below, I would estimate that I listened to at least 100 albums by queer performers this past year and have done what I could (space allowing) to write about as many as possible.

Dangerous Liaisons (Us Too), is the sexually graphic and feverishly funny debut disc by gay hip-hop artist **Johnny Dangerous**. "Hot Johnny" is a laundry list of sexual exploits that is sure to scorch more than a few ears. In "Fagazine Interview," Johnny "covers a lot of grounds in just one first verse," according to the interviewer, and pulls no punches in the next verse about the "down low brothers" he encounters when he's on tour. The remix of "Sugar Daddy" is a fierce workout that provides details about Johnny's sweet tooth. "Ball Busters" points a finger at all those who think it's cool to "hop beds," and "Not Your Average" pays a visit to the "house" of hip-hop.

While I listen to **Independence Meal** (Subtle Sister), the latest album by **Alix Olson**, I've been searching my soul, trying



Johnny Dangerous

to figure out what it is exactly about Olson that rubs me the wrong way. Here is what I came up with. 1) We already have an Ani



Alix Olson

DiFranco, who mastered the spoken word/acoustic guitar music thing and continues to do so as you will hear on her forthcoming **Educated Guess**. To her credit, Olson does surround herself with gifted queer musicians, including Ubaka Hill and Pamela Means. 2) The hyperventilated and hiccupped slam-poet delivery repeatedly wears thin over the course of one piece, let alone a dozen. In a concerted effort to find something nice to say, I will tell you that "Wholly Human," "8 X 10," and "Womyn

GrooveOut Shorts

Alix Olson
Independence Meal



From out of a muted hush of intense, fore-shadowing tones stems Alix Olson's take on the world, ranging all over her proverbial plot of emotions from happy to deflated, inspired to crestfallen. To take words from her own liner notes, it is "kindness and rage" in a homogenous combination that, as a great many press releases have acknowledged, is better conveyed in the live arena than on compact disc. Nevertheless, this openly-lesbian poet has separated that live work from what she intends to accomplish in her

recorded media, and in so doing has created a product saturated with a laid-back timbre and well-placed voice samples, everything hitting the precise points on which she has intended. Her backup band plays a huge part in this, holding back just enough to let her get everything across but embellishing the picture in such a way as to not let it appear blank. From Subtle Sister Productions. More info: www.alixolson.com. —Lance Walker

Britney Spears
In the Zone



Britney Spears has gone from a teen superstar to one of the most intriguing female artists of our time. On her fourth album, **In the Zone**, Spears collaborates with the likes of P. Diddy, R. Kelly, Moby, and

Before," are standout tracks worth hearing.

Ember Swift is another one of the out musicians who performs on Olson's **Independence Meal**, and Swift is also an artist whose delivery and performance persona are based in the Ani DiFranco tradition. On her most recent CD, **Stiltwalking** (Few'll Ignite Sound), Swift, an OutVoice Chart topper and an Outmusic nominee, does deliver some unusual surprises, including "Ten Feet Tall," "When a Gypsy Makes Her Violin Cry," and "Boinked (The Bride)."

Speaking of surprises, I didn't expect to be taken for a ride on a country road, as I was on **Tom Andersen's** new CD, **Who Knows?** (Other Music). Andersen, a five-time MAC (Manhattan Association of Cabarets & Clubs) award winner, covers the twangy "Once I Was" and the torchy "Ghost in This House," two songs written by country music songwriter Hugh Prestwood (Trisha Yearwood, Colin Raye, Kathy



Tom Andersen

Mattea), as well as doing a heartbreaking interpretation of "I Fall to Pieces." Even the originals, some of which were co-written with gay songwriter Tim DiPasqua, have a contemporary country quality. It's not difficult to imagine the Dixie Chicks, Martina McBride, or Blake Shelton covering "Another Tuesday," "Then Again," or "Who Knows?," although a daring country music DJ would do his listeners a great service by playing Andersen's own version of these songs. →

Madonna, among others. The songs on this album have much more of a dance-club rhythm than her previous albums. This is a well-written, well-performed CD, definitely one of Spears' more ambitious albums to date. From Jive Records (www.jiverecords.com). More info: www.britney.com. —Andrea Rodricks

Pink
Try This



Pink has experimented with a variety of musical styles, and this time she returns with a more rock-oriented album. On **Try This**, she once again teams up with Linda Perry and enlists Tim Armstrong of the punk band Rancid as a songwriter and producer. The music on the disc →

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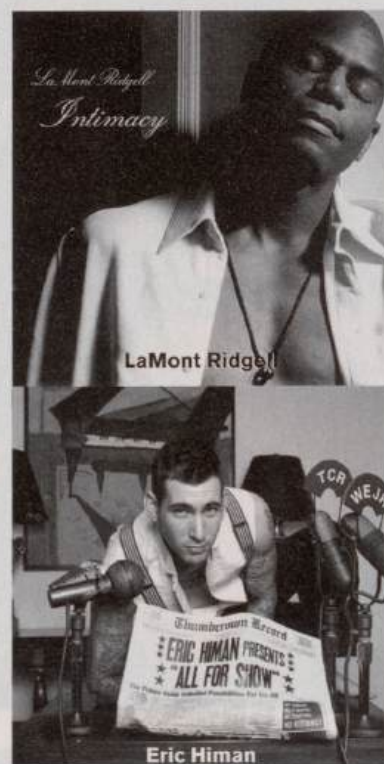
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GrooveOut continued from previous page

The songs on *Intimacy* by LaMont Ridgell (lamontridgell.com) are taken from Ridgell's cabaret show, which premiered in January 2002. Ridgell has superb taste, beginning with the title track, which is a powerful Bruce Roberts tune. He also does moving renditions of songs by Craig Carnelia ("What the Song Should Say/Could It Be Love?," "Look in My Eyes") and John Bucchino ("If I Ever Say I'm Over You," "Grateful"), and Roberts again ("Let Me Steal Your Heart from Him"). Ridgell also allows himself (and the listener) to have fun with "The Kite" (from *You're a Good Man, Charlie Brown*) and a revitalized reading of "Orange Colored Sky."

Could Eric Himan be the gay Chris Carrabba (of Dashboard Confessional)? He's got the tats, spent time in Florida, and he possesses an emo energy that is hard to deny. Himan's third album *All for Show* (Thumbcrown) also has the acoustic guitar fury of Melissa Ferrick and Ani DiFranco, and it also has the same queer spirit. From his admission of being a prude on "One Night Stands" to his confrontation of a rapist on "My Decision" to breaking through to someone on "The Outskirts of You" to the comfort of his shoulder on "A Good, Good Cry" to the



LaMont Ridgell

Eric Himan

closing perspectives of leaving someone ("On the Drive") and being left behind ("It's Only Fair"), the third time sounds like the charm for Himan.

As is always the case, there is no lack of discs by queer female bands. *Escape Artist* (Chaos Kitchen) by The Dolly Ranchers from Santa Fe is a stunning disc of insurgent Americana, reminiscent of The Be Good Tanyas, Victoria Williams, and early Erin McKeown. The Dolly Ranchers perform traditional-sounding originals such as "Drink Me," "Maddie Girl Slim," "Cholula" (as in "Maria gets her cholula on the side/and when she walks away/she ain't hardly satisfied"), "Train Bridge," "Chicken House Breakdown," "Stars at Night," and "WWJCD (What Would Johnny Cash Do?)," most with a queer stinger attached. The Dolly Ranchers' cover of Hazel Dickens's "Don't Put Her Down, You Helped Put Her There," also shows that they have

done their research.

Queer female rockers continue to dominate, and new discs by *Evil Beaver* and *Erase Errata* attest to that fact. *Pleased to Eat You* (Johanns Face/Frooty Nation) finds the Third Coast duo of Evie Evil (vocals and guitar) and Laura Ann Beaver (drums) still mining the metal ("Forbidden Fruit," "Pot Pie," "You Suck! Sucker," "Nacho Baby,"

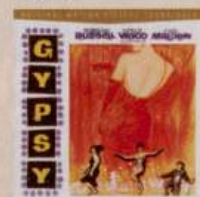
"Where's the Beef?") and even dabble in some experimentation ("Sonny Side Up") that pays off for them. Left Coasters Erase Errata could be graduates of the punk rock class of '77, but are more likely the children of the class of '77. Listen closely and you can hear echoes of Gang of Four and The Slits throughout *At Crystal Palace* (Trouble Man Unlimited). In this challenging but rewarding album, recommended tracks include "Ca. Viewing," "Let's Be Active c/o Club Hott," "The White Horse Is Bucking," and "A Thief Detests, The Criminal Elements of the Ruling Class."

Gay men are also rocking out when they can. *Frustrated Housewives*, for instance, have released an EP, *Boys Like Me* (Le Lipsticke) with two edgy remixes of The Waitresses' "I Know What Boys Like" and the original Adam Baum tune "Trade."

The bands The Unicorns and Atomicbombpocketknife have openly gay men within their ranks. *Che Arthur*, who sounds like Husker Du era Bob Mould on his solo debut disc, *All of Your Tomorrows Were Decided Today* (Flameshovel), is a member of the Chicago band Atomicbombpocketknife. The album opens with some straightforward rockers before mellowing out on the songs "Words Are Impossible," "After It Has Turned to Dust," "Valley of Fire," and the instrumental "Heresies." Arthur cranks it up again on the title track and "Chains." *Who Will Cut Our Hair When We're Gone?* (Alien 8) by The Unicorns features openly gay singer Alden Penner, and like The Hidden Cameras, proves that there is a massive amount of cool queer music being made in Canada. Electronic flourishes enhance the guitars and drums on songs such as "Tuff Ghost," a penny whistle raises the stakes on "Sea Ghost," a garage rock roar propels "The Clap," "I →

George O'Dowd (played by Euan Morton), a scenester who grows into international pop superstar Boy George. The CD features 20 original songs penned by Boy George, as well as his classic new-wave hit "Do You Really Want to Hurt Me." From First Night Records (www.first-night-records.com). —Suzie Lynde

Original Motion Picture Soundtrack Gypsy



Long out of print, now remastered for the first time ever, let *Gypsy* entertain you, let *Gypsy* make you smile! This new CD features vocal performances by Natalie Wood and Rosalind Russell, and though it's actually a bit painful to listen to Russell, it's also a treat—we're allowed behind the scenes to hear why Broadway and nightclub performer Lisa Kirk

was hired to do the vocals for the film. (However, it's all Russell on "Mr. Goldstone, I Love You," and on "Rose's Turn" it's both Russell and Kirk.) We also get to listen to six previously unreleased gems: the film version of the classic "Rose's Turn" and rare outtakes of "Together Wherever We Go," "Some People," "Small World," "You'll Never Get Away from Me," and "Everything's Coming Up Roses." You'll love the accompanying booklet with notes on the making of the film, and it also contains some great photos. Some people sit on their butts, but don't be one of them—get up and get out and get *Gypsy*. From Rhino Movie Music (www.rhino.com). —Blase DiStefano

Original Broadway Cast Recording The Boy from Oz

The Boy from Oz tells the dazzling, funny, and heartbreaking story of the great entertainer Peter Allen, from his humble beginnings growing up in the Australian outback through a meteoric →

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GrooveOut continued from page 68

Was Born (a Unicorn)" has a pop zest, "Inoculate the Innocuous" recalls The Cure, and "Ready to Die" is the curious counterpart to opening track "I Don't Wanna Die."

Some 30 years after the release of *Fur Coats and Blue Jeans*, her debut album, **Deidre McCalla** is back with her latest disc, *Playing for Keeps* (MaidenRock). Continuing to combine her persuasive political messages with folk, country, bluegrass, and gospel musical arrangement, McCalla's latest is definitely a keeper. McCalla shines her unique sense of humor on "If God Only Knew," a song about a serious subject, on which she is joined by Linda Tillery. Touching on topical matters "from crusades to jihads," McCalla sings "Armies line up/And their hearts fill with pride/Each one convinced/They've got God on their side." You can almost hear her shaking her head in the chorus as she sings, "For if God only knew/What's being done in her name/She'd realize the humans/Have all gone insane."

Playing for Keeps also has a pair of songs about letting go of love. "Moving on from Here," contains the empowering lines "Looking straight ahead/Facing the fear/I can't undo what's done/But I am moving on from here," which is a sentiment to which



Deidre McCalla

many people can relate. "Thanks for Asking" deals with the dreaded experience of running into an ex-lover after a breakup and is infused with a positive outlook. "Mama Loves Me," which is about the many "ways to be a family," deserves to become the theme song of alternative families everywhere. In the song, McCalla who is a co-founder of Atlanta Family Pride, sings about same-sex parents, single moms, and blended families, with a warm, loving, and parental embrace.

Acclaimed and award-winning out singer/songwriter **SONiA** has reissued her 2001 CD, *Me, Too* (Disappear Records). She has shuffled the song order and added her cover of "I Just Don't Know What to Do" (which originally appeared on the Dusty Springfield tribute disc *Forever Dusty*). As always, it's a pleasure to have something to listen to by SONiA, and I am still touched by her duet with her nephew Dylan on "Turtle Flowers," a song that they co-wrote. Acoustic blues singer/songwriter **Sean Wiggins** has released her third album, *I Gotta Be Me* (Wigmeister Music). A well-traveled live performer, Wiggins includes "live" song intros to "L.A. Blues," the title track, "Grandpa," the humorous yet traumatic "music business is rewarding" live monologue "The St. Louis Story," and the expressions of gratitude in "Thanks."

way ("Come Rain or Come Shine" from *St. Louis Woman*, "A Sleepin' Bee" from *House of Flowers*), as well as less frequently heard songs like "Let's Take a Walk Around the Block" and "Don't Like Goodbyes." This reissue features two new bonus tracks, "Let's Fall in Love" and "Optimistic Voices" from *The Wizard of Oz*. From Fynsworth Alley (www.fynsworthalley.com). —TC

Nelly Furtado Folklore



Nelly Furtado showed up on the scene in the fall of 2000 with the release of her acclaimed debut *Whoa, Nelly!* Radio tracks such as "I'm Like a Bird" and "Turn off the Light" introduced listeners to a young Canadian, British Columbian by birth and Portuguese by heritage, who brought a self-styled vibrancy to the diverse music she whipped together: hip-hop, Portuguese fado, pop, soul, classical, Brazilian, dance, folk, Latin, and anything else that seemed expressive and alive to her. The new album's songs further develop the ideas and emotions that have long compelled Furtado. And with her ever-upbeat sense of fusion and generosity,

Favorite tracks of mine include the lovely "Remember Spring" and the piano-driven "Anyway It Happens."

And don't forget about **Christine Martucci**, a rocker from the Melissa Etheridge mold, and her new CD, *Mama Says* (www.christinemartucci.com).

LGBT choruses have been singing the songs of John Kander and Fred Ebb for years. Several of the duo's musical theater creations—*Cabaret*, *Chicago*, *The Rink*, *The Act*, *Kiss of the Spider Woman*, *Woman of the Year*, to name just a few—have a queer sensibility and contain songs that are a good fit for queer choral groups. **Boston Gay Men's Chorus**, under the musical direction of Reuben M. Reynolds III, have taken note of Kander and Ebb's appeal and have recorded *Razzle Dazzle: The Broadway Hits of Kander & Ebb* (www.bgmc.com), an entire CD of the pair's compositions.

Finally, I want to make mention of a trio of older discs by queer artists. They are *Precious* (www.brianwspencer.com) by self-professed Catie Curtis fan **Brian W. Spencer**; *Inside* (rgoberville@jths.org) by **Richard Anthony** (a Chicago-area singer/songwriter who I met when he was competing in one of the Windy City Suburban Gay Idol contests); and *Too Much Excitement* (Beluga) by the Chicago-based trio **Pistol Whipped**.

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.

her music continues to ignore the stylistic restrictions that can leave pop music stale. From DreamWorks Records (www.dreamworksrecords.com). More info: www.nellyfurtado.com. —SL

Floetry Floacism "Live"



Everything you always wanted to know about Philadelphia but were afraid to ask comes true again with this London, England duo's relocation to Philly three years ago. As if the presence of The Roots over the last 10 years and the more recent materialization of Jill Scott and Kindred the Family Soul weren't enough, Floetry further reaffirms our faith in the city as a hotbed of soul as they come racing out of the gates with a two-disc set showcasing songs from their debut album *Floetic* as well as three newly recorded tracks. Floetry manages to knit together two very unique voices in Marsha Ambrosius and Natalie Stewart, crisscrossing their stories and melodies over an apt wall of sound birthed of the work of producers A Touch of Jazz, overseen by Philly stalwart DJ Jazzy Jeff Townes. An accom- →

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GrooveOut Shorts continued from page 68



rise to fame as an international star who would go on to sell out week-long engagements at Radio City Music Hall. Discovered by Judy Garland, he married her daughter Liza Minnelli and went on to become a beloved performer and an Oscar-winning songwriter. The production features stage and screen star Hugh Jackman as Allen. From Decca Broadway (www.iclassics.com/iclassics/broadway.jsp). —Troy Carrington

Maureen McGovern Out of This World



Out of This World is a nuanced and impassioned collection of songs by Harold Arlen. McGovern's impeccably rendered interpretations include favorites from Hollywood ("Over the Rainbow" from *The Wizard of Oz*, "The Man That Got Away" from *A Star Is Born*) and Broad-

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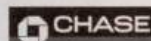
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GrooveOut Shorts

continued from
page 70

panying live DVD, featuring a full one-hour show, is exactly what you would expect from listening to their recordings—full of energy, life, and a seduction of their audience the recordings couldn't possibly deliver. Though the video itself is a little flat compared to the film, the sound does not suffer. This live show was recorded at House of Blues in New Orleans—arguably one of the best-sounding rooms in the country, if not the world. Look for them to bring that sound to Houston in February, supporting Erykah Badu when she kicks off her tour in our fair city. From DreamWorks (www.dreamworksrecords.com). —LW

Toni Braxton Ultimate



This ultimate R&B album is the first anthology of Toni Braxton's entire recording career. *Ultimate* has a decade of pop/R&B hits by one of the most recognizable voices in music history. This release also includes her debut single "Give U My Heart," a collaboration with Babyface. In addition, there are two new recordings and a previously unreleased radio cut of the Hex Hector remix for "Un-Break My Heart." With her sultry R&B vocals Toni Braxton has become an industry legend. From Arista Records (www.arista.com). —AR

Galleon So I Begin



Galleon is French musicians Gilles Luka and Philippe Laurent. (Fellow rugby buddies for over 10 years, they named their duo after French football star Jerome Galleon.) Both producers in their own right, they got together two years ago and decided to introduce a new sound, a hybrid of pop, rock, and house, with an acoustic feeling. Laurent is the duo's keyboardist and mixer; Luka is the vocalist and melody man. The Galleon single "So I Begin" went gold in France, selling more than 300,000 singles, and was a top-10 hit in New York City. From Radikal Records (www.radikal.com). More info: www.galleon-online.com. —TC

Berlin Philharmonic/Sir Simon Rattle Beethoven: Fidelio



Beethoven's only opera was first heard in 1805 when it bore the title *Leonore*, the true name of the heroine who disguises herself as a man—Fidelio—to rescue her husband, a political prisoner. A second version appeared in 1806 and a further revision in May 1814. For this recording, Sir Simon Rattle chose

the orchestra of which he is now chief conductor and artistic director, the Berlin Philharmonic. This recording is taken from concert performances at the Philharmonie in Berlin in April 2003. The 2-CD set is from EMI Classics (www.emiclassics.com). More info: www.berlin-philharmonic.com. —TC

Eroica Trio

Beethoven: Triple Concerto Op. 56 & Piano Trio Op. 11



Pianist Erika Nickrenz, violinist Adela Peña, and cellist Sara Sant'Ambrogio have been making beautiful music together since they were children. It was while they were students at Juilliard and well on their

way to distinguished solo careers that they decided to form the Eroica Trio. Since winning the prestigious Naumburg Award in 1991, followed by a hugely successful Lincoln Center debut, the Grammy-nominated trio has become one of the most acclaimed chamber-music groups in the world. They have performed the Beethoven Triple Concerto more frequently than any other trio in history. From Angel Records (www.angelrecords.com). Mark your calendar: The Eroica Trio is scheduled for a Houston concert on April 27, 2004, at Stude Concert Hall. —SL

Music DVD

Jennifer Lopez The Reel Me



Jennifer Lopez is one of the most infamously famous female entertainers of our time. This impressive DVD includes all of J Lo's music videos, and she has incorporated an interview between each video to give it a more personal touch. J Lo has an eye for the visuals, and her videos are pro-

ductions that elevate the songs to new heights. The DVD contains every J Lo video from her first "If You Had My Love" to the latest "Baby I Love U." Also included is a six-track CD with some of J Lo's recently remixed tracks. From Sony Music (www.sonymusic.com/dvd). For more info: www.jenniferlopez.com. —AR

Music DVD

Various Artists Disco Inferno



Disco has never really gone away. This ultimate collection of disco classics, which never fail to pack any dance floor, is designed to take you back to some great disco memories. The DVD includes disco artists performing live on a European disco television show. Classic

Pictures releases the live performances taken from *Musik Laden*, an old TV show from West Germany.

There are some great songs including Donna Summer's "She Works Hard for the Money" as well as performances from the likes of The Village People, The Jacksons, Sister Sledge, Lipps Incorporated, and Boney M. From Classic Pictures (www.classicpictures.co.uk). —AR

Music DVD

Various Artists Dance Hits USA

Anyone who is a fan of dance music and all of the genres that fall under the general category of dance is well aware that dance music gets little to



no exposure in the national media. What is a dance music fan to do? Radikal Records comes to the rescue with *Dance Hits USA* on DVD, which features top artists such as ATB, Zombie Nation, Perpetuous Dreamer, Sinead O'Connor, Mad'house, Voodoo & Serano, and Galleon. From Radikal Records (www.radikal.com). —SL

JUST SWEET ENOUGH

If Erasure isn't the gayest band you've ever heard, then the book needs to be rewritten, the deck needs to be reshuffled, and those dance floors need to be cleared. When "Oh L'Amour" broke in 1986, it only reached number 85 on the UK charts, but it set the stage for an illustrious career for the duo of Andy Bell and Vince Clarke (also one of the founding members of Depeche Mode and Yaz).

The flamboyant Bell was the perfect vehicle for their sugary brand of electro-pop, and some 17 years later it is evident that the aforementioned sugar has caramelized itself into stone. Erasure has forged a legendary career full of sticky-sweet pop hits, and this Greatest Hits collection is a fitting tribute to their storied history.

The DVD disc is only further acknowledgement of their unbridled flamboyance and the way in which it ties itself to their music, weaving in and out of every line and every movement. Andy Bell makes as pretty a woman as he does a gorgeous man, taking the lead role in an era of music videos that encouraged a type of fun which was fashioned from that organic element of the band having a say in the images and thoughts their visual element would communicate.

Without the videos, you still have the songs, but what Erasure has done with the music video is incredibly groundbreaking in terms of what they were doing with (at the time) somewhat

limited tools. There were very few special effects, but loads of sharp camera work and the relentless pursuit of every perfect angle into which Bell's face could fall (which were a lot). But it is the editing that makes the videos work—the timing of the images in with the songs, subtle movements in the sets which are choreographed with the music in flawless meter. Easily the most brilliant example of this is "Love to Hate You," with director David Mallet's meticulous work slinging itself all over the map in a flurry of magnificent backdrops, implausible lighting, and a peculiar story that has you begging for the next page to turn itself.

Erasure was and still is a flexible muscle of pop music—all over the place in every song, constantly reinventing themselves as if the canvas needs to be re-stretched every time they created something new, and that is what has been their strongest point all along. Despite what they have done for themselves and in the space of their own career, what they have formulated musically over the years has opened the doors (and the public ear) for newer acts such as New York City's synth-pop darlings Soviet, who might just be the next carriers of the torch in the sticky-sweet dominion of electro-song. Watch out. From Sire/Mute (www.mute.com). —LW ■



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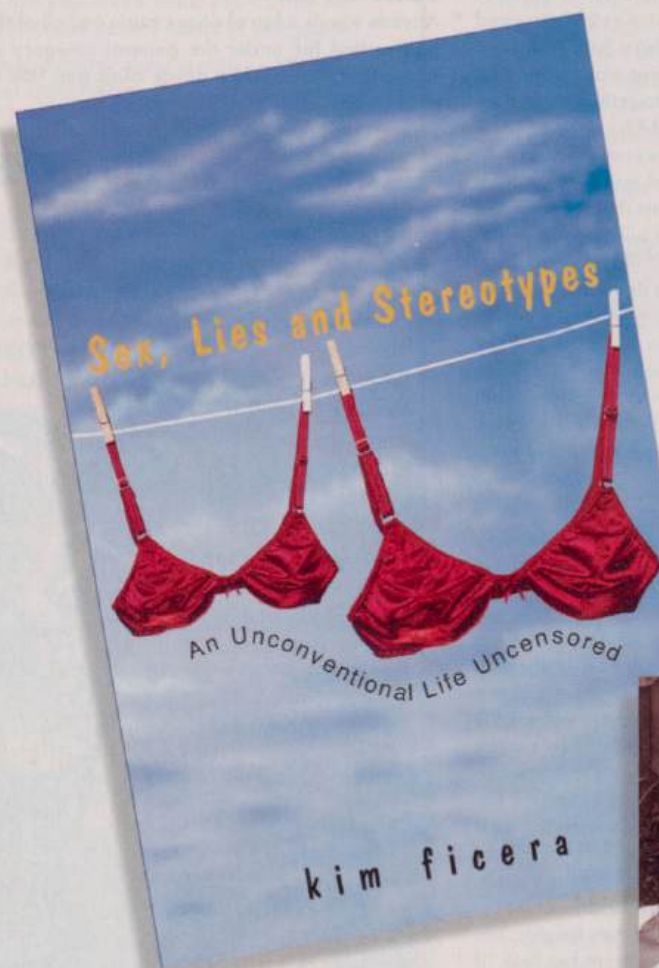
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ReadOut

by Gregg Shapiro

LESBIAN LAUGHTER

Humorist Kim Ficera considers
Sex, Lies and Stereotypes



"I often called Jerry Falwell and Pat Robertson morons," author Ficera recalls.



Kim Ficera's outrageously entertaining and amusing collection of essays, *Sex, Lies and Stereotypes* (Kensington Books), is subtitled "An unconventional life uncensored." If you believe what you read, unconventional is the right word. Ficera, who is one of *Out*'s 2003 Out 100, pushes all the right buttons and is sure to have you laughing out loud and repeating some of her most humorous observations to your lesbian, gay, and straight friends.

Gregg Shapiro: One stereotype that you dispel with your book *Sex, Lies and Stereotypes* is the one about humorless lesbians. When did you discover that you were funny?

Kim Ficera: When Joanne Conetta wrote in my autograph book, "Your [sic] the funnies

[sic] girl I know," I think we were in the third grade. Joann couldn't spell, but she had a great laugh. I loved making her laugh. My family tells me that I've always been "entertaining." What they really mean is that I've always been sarcastic. My point is people will tell you when you're funny. Your job is to figure out *how* you're funny and what best to do with that information. I think delivery is the key to a successful joke and a witty phrase. If you want proof of this, just think of a time when you heard someone with no personality and bad timing screw up a really good joke or story. So it helps to be an extrovert with rhythm.

Emerson College in Boston, where you received your undergraduate degree, has a reputation for being something of a →

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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.

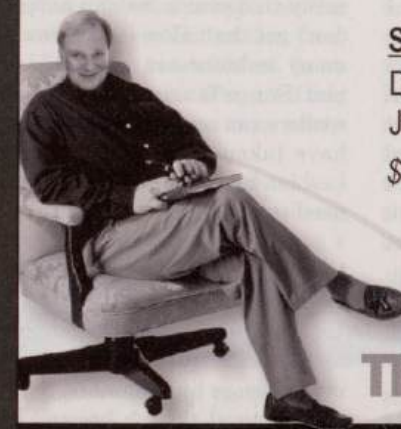
This workshop is designed to:

- 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, light-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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TONY CARROLL, LMSW-ACP

comedy factory, with Denis Leary and Anthony Clark being among some of the other alumnus. Did being at Emerson make you want to pursue humor writing? Actually, when I was at Emerson, I wrote short stories and poetry—some pretty dark poetry, in fact. I was there to study—something I hadn't bothered to do in high school, the place where I learned to do drugs and touch my nose with my tongue. I'd dropped out in '76. So when I decided to finish school and then go on to college, I was very serious about getting my shit together. Very serious.

At Emerson I read Jerzy Kosinski early on and loved his work, namely *The Painted Bird*. Powerful stuff! It was a Holocaust story—sad, moving, violent, and sexual. Nothing funny about it at all. I soon noticed that my own short stories took on dark and death-filled topics. I laugh at it now, because I honestly don't remember what was going through my head at the time. I can't blame drugs, because I'd stopped taking them. I don't even know if I was a good or bad poet and short-story writer. But if this humor thing doesn't work out, I might try writing horror scripts. Why not? Sounds like fun.

Like fellow lesbian journalist Deb Price, you are a queer voice in mainstream newspapers. What has that experience been like for you?

It was one of the best experiences of my life. Too often, gay journalists at gay publications aren't taken seriously, not even by other gay journalists in similar positions. So they use their positions at gay pubs as stepping stones to better jobs at nongay pubs, where they hope to gain respect and learn more. By the way, in my opinion, lack of respect, coupled with the fact that gay publications don't pay writers well, might explain why there are too few really great GLBT journalists at GLBT publications.

Anyway, being an out lesbian at an alternative weekly helped me to win respect and favor with readers and peers. My agenda wasn't assumed because my job was clear. I was an opinionated columnist with a sense of humor. I made people think while also making them laugh. Everyone knew that I was a liberal queer with very strong opinions on organized religion and the Republican Party. I often called Jerry Falwell and Pat Robertson morons. And I wasn't easy on the current administration. But more often I made fun of myself and other

queers. "Homo Depot," my very first published essay, is a great example of that.

Very early in *Sex, Lies and Stereotypes*, on the acknowledgements page in fact, you make reference to God. God and religion surface again in the essays "The Immaculate Deception," "Surgeon on the Mound," "God Is a Boy's Name," "The Visit," and others. What part do you think being Catholic and having a religious upbringing played in developing your sense of humor? A huge part. Without a sense of humor, I'd be writing love letters to the pope from a poorly decorated house I'd share with a husband, five kids, and nine bibles, instead of writing essays. The behavior of very religious people fascinates me. I couldn't make up the insane and funny things people say and do to convince each other that their beliefs are true and right.

When I was seven and about to receive communion for the first time, I asked my mother what the body of Christ tastes like. As I wrote in the book, with a straight face she told me it tastes like baloney, my favorite lunchmeat at the time. Huh? The body of Christ tastes *nothing* like baloney!

I love my parents, and I know that they were trying to do the right thing by dragging me to church, sending me to catechism, and hanging extra-large crucifixes in our house, but there were days, Sundays specifically, when my mother just acted crazy. When I was seven and about to receive communion for the first time, I asked my mother what the body of Christ tastes like. As I wrote in the book, with a straight face she told me it tastes like baloney, my favorite lunchmeat at the time. Huh? The body of Christ tastes *nothing* like baloney! Why not tell me it tastes like a really thin, bland cracker? I think Jesus would have approved of that simple, honest answer. I mean, c'mon! It's not as if she needed to protect me from Christ's flesh, a vile snack disguised as a wafer and distributed by the cannibal priests at our church. What the hell was she thinking?

You also touch on some very sacred topics in the lesbian community including the mullet ("Mullet Head"), the meeting of the partner's family ("All in the Family"), faking orgasms ("Liar, Liar Pants on Fire"),

breasts ("The Tit Parade"), common lesbian names ("Name that Lesbian"), and, of course, the holy of holies, Home Depot ("Homo Depot"). How do you decide that a subject is worth writing about?

Nothing's taboo, but some things, like the mullet, are overdone. Unless a writer can come up with a new angle on an old topic, he shouldn't touch it. Unless the mullet makes a serious comeback, I'm done with it.

When I'm still laughing about an experience a week later, I do my best to put it on paper effectively. For example, this past weekend my partner and I went to South Carolina to visit her Irish family and celebrate an early Thanksgiving. We stayed at the beach house of a family friend who also happens to be a high-ranking Republican in that state. As the only Democrat and full-fledged Italian in the bunch, it was my job to make antipasto. So I, a lesbian with a sincere hatred of George W., borrowed a Jeep covered with *Bush / Cheney in 04* bumper stickers and headed to the Bi-Lo—the name in itself begs for an essay, don't you think?—supermarket in search of imported prosciutto and sharp provolone. Try finding that stuff in South Carolina. Try explaining to the 80-plus-year-old man bagging groceries—food he'd clearly never before laid eyes on—that antipasto is *not* the same thing as a salad, nor is it Italian (pronounced *Eye-talian*) for artichoke.

What has the reception for the book been like in the lesbian community?

Overall, the response has been great. I have a stack of letters from lesbian readers who insist that I am their twin, separated from them at birth. They get what I'm writing. A few lesbians have had a hard time with my essay on common lesbian names, though. I don't get that. How is the observation that many lesbians are named Linda, Donna, and Sue offensive? Maybe one of your readers can explain that one to me. Others have taken issue with my comments on Lesbian Bed Death. Dare I say those women need to get laid?

Have you begun assembling essays for your next book?

Yes. The new book will be slightly different in the sense that the essays will be connected, more like chapters. I'm not going to call it a novel, though, because I can't decide if that word bores me or scares me to death.

Gregg Shapiro writes regularly for OutSmart on music and culture.

Capricorn (Dec. 22-Jan. 19)

Jupiter. Travel, education, and social justice are aroused with Jupiter moving through your solar ninth house. You are very curious about expanding upon your education or simply broadening your horizons. You will come into more contact with people from different cultures and countries. These are great people for you to be involved with in business or even relationships. After September, Jupiter enters your solar 10th house of career, public life, and long-range security. This should be an excellent time for you to seek promotions or new, improved job situations. You will carry a sense of knowing and power as you enter all new situations. People will be expecting more from you, and leadership may be thrust upon you.

Saturn. Your ruling planet, Saturn, is having you review your structure of relationships. If you are in a good relationship, this is a time of renewal and building new goals. If your partnership is questionable, it must be improved. Ignoring problems that are there will be impossible. This would be a great year to consider some couple's counseling. If you are not involved, you are interested in potential relationships that have a sense of commitment and destiny. And you are looking for people who have a traditional view of commitment. This is a good time to enter into commitments for you since you are not blinded by love.

Uranus. You are becoming more open in your communications. You are not so self-judgmental about what you are saying and the impact that it will have on others. You may find that your mental activity has sped up and you are restless. There is a tendency toward clumsiness during this time. Your mind is definitely more open to new ideas and views. Travel, school, or a new social group can be beneficial now. You are more attracted to high-tech gadgetry in all aspects of daily life. Expect to be bored with your routines as you look for more interesting ways to live.

Neptune. Finances can be very confusing now. On one level of consciousness, you are not as afraid of being a

bag lady as you once were. And you are freed from the notion of having to survive. The pressing question is, *What do I want to do with my capabilities?* This is an extremely different perspective for a practical sign such as yours. First, you must find internal motivation that is not based on what the world thinks. Second, you have to use your genius more imaginatively. And third, you must do something about this now, so you don't shoot yourself in the



Aquarius (Jan. 20-Feb. 18)

Jupiter. With Jupiter moving through your solar eighth house, you are very busy this year exploring the depths of collective resources, exploring higher states of consciousness, and trying to regenerate your very soul. The Universe is open to helping you by expanding your shared resources in partnerships and drawing you closer to your partner than ever. A

whole new level of intimacy is open to exploration. You are beginning to understand just what makes you tick. After September, Jupiter makes entrance into your solar ninth house of philosophy, travel, and histories. School is an excellent place to be at this time. You are open to new ideas and views. Travel is certainly on your agenda.

continued on page 85



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IN THE WAITING ROOM

Sally and wife face the scope and discover everything's relative

Colonoscopy. The blue sign's crisp white letters are medical, unflinching. A bold arrow pointing down the gray-carpeted hall leaves no guesswork about which way we need to go. Go may be the wrong choice of words, considering that's all my sweetheart has been doing since she drank the required bowel-cleansing potion at 5 last night—that after a day of fasting. She followed all the prep instructions for her colon exam, bravely downed the broth, filtered apple juice, and endless glasses of water. I felt callous munching on my after-dinner Fig-Newmans.

My unlawfully wedded wife and I arrive at the clinic 10 minutes early to allow for bathroom time. For months she's been dreading this, her first colonoscopy—or, as we've been calling it, her butt-o-scope. She's nervous even though it's only a routine

exam, diagnostic care for the well insured. Her employer doesn't offer domestic partner benefits—and we don't live in California, Vermont, or Belgium, where the law requires employers to be fair—so I am not

The clinic's anti-discrimination policy hangs on the wall in front of us. The phrase *sexual orientation* catches my eye. Nice to know the great queerasaurus wandered this sterile land before we got here.

covered by her health-care policy. Like every other lesbian and gay couple we know, we are rooting for Massachusetts, eagerly awaiting marriage equality and the equalization of benefits. We expect to see these changes follow a positive ruling in The Old Bay State, but for now, no butt-o-scope for me—a privilege that at the moment I

am relieved to forego. Although I don't dare say *relieved*.

The clinic's automatic doors open for us, just as they do for heterosexuals, I might add. I'm fired up these days about the injustice and stupidity of the Federal Marriage Amendment and am prone to get testy. But today's priority is to get my girlfriend through her procedure with as little trauma as possible, and I must stay on task. We quickly find the elevators. Sweetie gives a pained look. The elevator takes its time. She leans on me and whimpers, "I feel like shit."

I recognize a pun when I hear one, but I keep it to myself. She's in no mood for joking. She hasn't eaten in more than 24 hours, and her innards are in overdrive.

The clinic's anti-discrimination policy hangs on the wall in front of us. The phrase *sexual orientation* catches my eye. Nice to

know the great queerasaurus wandered this sterile land before we got here. Activist clinic employees who roamed these polished floors in years past agitated for a policy change to include people like us. I'm grateful and recognize the risks they took in the struggle for equality. Thanks to them we're free to focus on our more urgent concerns, which, gauging by my honey's expression, are getting more urgent by the minute.

I think about the doctor and staff who will be handling my tender baby today and hope they are up on the policy as well as their colon-examining skills. I hold my finger to the glass-framed document. My sleep-deprived partner, bleary from a gut-rumbly night, reads the words affirming our entitlement to equal treatment. She cracks her first smile of the day. (Perhaps *crack* is the wrong word considering the tender state of hers after flushing all that liquid through her guts. I suppose you can't blame the doctor for wanting an unobstructed view. Won't it make his day when he finds my darling's GI tract clean and clear as the Olympic luge?)

On the third floor at last, the receptionist greets morning appointments with magic words. "They'll come get you in just a minute and make you real comfortable." This is the talk of legal drug pushers.

Wifey smiles faintly. She completes the paperwork. The receptionist wastes no time in pointing out the restroom around the corner. My darling heads right for it. (I guess it's OK to say *head*, now that one is available.)

My gal and I take a seat on an upholstered bench. It is hard and unaccommodating. This waiting room was not designed for people to kick back and relax. Nobody sits still here very long.

For months my sweetheart has been worried about going under the anesthesia. She read somewhere that sometimes you don't wake up, an idea she hasn't been able to shake. She's been anxious, imagining the worst. But now her angst has been dulled by the prep ordeal. She mumbles, "I don't care what they do to me." Wiped out as she is (I can't say *wiped*), she has the presence of mind to tug off her wedding ring and hand it to me for safekeeping. I slip her ring onto my finger, where it clicks softly against my matching gold band. We hold hands. She rests her head on my shoulder. I stroke her hair. There's no closet in this waiting room.

A woman wearing a nametag lanyard strides over and introduces herself. "I'm Mattie," she says and holds out her hand. I'm thinking about that nondiscrimination

policy. Mattie clutches a clipboard, glances at it to make sure she's got the right patient. She sure is chipper at this early hour. Peristalsis hasn't kept her up all night.

"What relation are you?" she aims her question directly at me. My beloved is too groggy for answering complicated questions. Please God, or whatever force governs these things, don't let this be a difficult moment. Could we just for once be a normal couple, no raised eyebrows and no weird energy? I am not in confrontation mode, so I put my trust in that sign.

"We're married," I say, trying not to sound defiant. In any other situation I might launch into a tirade about discrimination, bigotry, and homophobia. I'm used to explaining our entitlement to equal rights. But I'm in tender nurturing mode and in no mood for politics.

"Great!" Mattie grins. "OK if I put *wife* on her chart?" She is downright eager to invoke the nondiscrimination clause.

Colonoscopy: the great equalizer.



Sally Sheklow was born and raised in Palm Springs. She and her partner of 16 years accompany each other through life in Eugene, Oregon.

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DAMES AT SEA

Mexico cruise stars top women and The L Word premiere

The gals (and many guys, too) have remotes at the ready for *The L Word*, the new Showtime series premiering January 18 about litesome young women—including sapphic sisters—in Los Angeles. (See our interview with creator Ilene Chaiken on page 00.) Olivia, the travel provider for lesbians and their loved ones, has also jumped on the *L* ship with a January 16–23 cruise of the Mexican Riviera featuring some of the program cast.

As if the chance to rub elbows with Jennifer Beals and Pam Grier (honey, it's *Foxy Brown*) weren't enough incentive, Olivia will host a week of panel discussions and breakout sessions featuring a brace of accomplished lesbians. Billed as the first Women's Leadership Summit, the event stars Col. Grethe Cammermeyer, the decorated former Army nurse and advocate for lesbian and gay service members. Also on the bill:

- Kate Kendell, National Center for Lesbian Rights executive director
- Kathy Levinson, former president and COO of E*TRADE and founder of the Lesbian Equality Foundation of Silicon Valley
- Linda Villarosa, author and former executive editor of *Essence*
- Judy Wieder, senior vice president and corporate editorial director of LPI Media, parent company of *Out*, *The Advocate*, *The Out Traveler*, and *HIV Plus*.
- Elizabeth Falkner, named one of the nation's top pastry chefs by *Bon Appetit*.



Women on water: Col. Grethe Cammermeyer (above) headlines the seafaring Women's Leadership Summit aboard the MS Standendam, which also features cast members of *The L Word*, who include Jennifer Beals (far right) and Pam Grier.



The lineup of cruise entertainment aboard the MS Statendam will include Suede, Lucie Blue Tremblay, Zoe Lewis, as well as comedians Suzanne Westenhoefer, Kathleen Madigan, and Karen Williams. Finally, Olivia will also present a premier screening of *The L Word*.

Rates for the San Diego-Puerto Vallarta run start at \$999 per person double occupancy. Olivia offers special prices until January 15. Details: www.olivia.com.

Victor Zorn reported on the lesbian-owned Highlands Inn in the November issue.

MORE CRUISING

From January 24–31, Dr. Peggy Rudd, author of *My Husband Wears My Clothes* and *Crossdressing with Dignity*, and Melanie Rudd will host another Dignity Cruise, which allows passengers to enjoy their vacation dressed the way they like.

"On the Dignity Cruise 20 cruise out of Houston/Galveston in November, there were 16 crossdressers and a equal number of spouses, girlfriends, and supportive friends as well as many from the Houston-area GLB community," the Rudds report. "Since 1988, over 800 transgender individuals together with spouses, girlfriends,

family members, and supportive friends have enjoyed the ultimate *en femme* adventure. We also educate our fellow passengers about the dignity of the GLBT community, which then leads to greater understanding and acceptance—even by some of the conservative religious groups."

The seven-day January excursion aboard the Royal Caribbean Grandeur of the Seas will depart New Orleans and travel to Costa Maya, Grand Cayman, and Cozumel. Rates range from \$420 to \$710. Details: www.pmpub.com. For reservations, contact Katy-based Dignity Cruises at 281/347-SAIL or dignitycruises@mindspring.com. ■

Crossing over: On the last Dignity Cruise, passengers included Donna (l), a Canadian transgender individual, and Wendy, a San Francisco lesbian.



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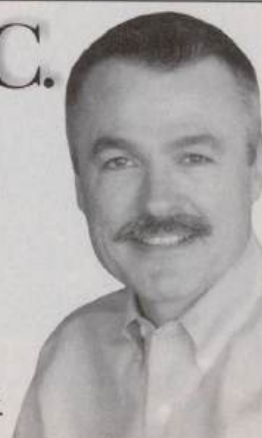
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Calendar of Events

Deadline for OutSmart's February issue is 5 p.m., Monday, January 11.

JANUARY

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 (Thu.)

Chill Out. Mindful Living presents an eight-week class in mindfulness, meditation, and stress reduction. Gain self-awareness, reduce reactivity to thought and urges and nurture your well-being through this approach intended as a complement to competent medical and

psychological treatment, not an alternative. Thursdays, 6:30-9 pm. Info: 713/522-7032 or www.livingmindfully.org.

10 (Sat.)

A Winter's Intermezzo. The Center for the Performing Arts at the Woodlands, home to Cynthia Woods Mitchell Pavilion, hosts this fundraiser to benefit the Pavilion's educational outreach and performing arts programs. The black-tie event offers a sumptuous meal with wine pairings, performances from the Houston Symphony, the Houston Ballet, and Big Bad Voodoo Daddy, and a raffle for a 2004 BMW Z4 Roadster, a European trip for two, and a ladies' Baume & Mercier diamond-trimmed watch. \$250/person, \$2,500-\$15,000/table for 10. 6:30 pm at Cynthia Woods Mitchell Pavilion, 2005 Lake Robbins Dr., The Woodlands, 281/364-3010 or www.pavilion.woodlandscenter.org.

13 (Tue.)

The Chieftains. With 40 years and 40 albums behind them, The Chieftains are Ireland's most enduring and endearing musical ambassadors. Having played with countless major names in the musical world from the Rolling Stones to Sarah McLachlan, the quartet returns to Houston with the breathtaking Celtic music of the flute, harp, fiddle, and uilleann pipes. 8 pm at Jones Hall. Tickets/info: 713/227-45PA or www.spahouston.org.

16 (Fri.)

Séan Curran Company. A former Irish step dancer and member of STOMP, Séan Curran has equal love for dance as well as rhythm. His original style blends intelligence, innovation, and inspired

physical humor. 8 pm at Wortham Center's Cullen Theater, 500 Texas at Smith. For tickets and information: 713/227-45PA or www.spahouston.org.

23 (Fri.)

Some Other Night Music. Da Camera pairs twilight-inspired music with Van Gogh's impassioned mandala covered painting *The Starry Night*. Compositions include Brahms' Trio No. 1 in B Major, Op. 8, and Schoenberg's Transfigured Night, Op. 4. Performers include baritone William Sharp and cellist Andres Diaz. \$20-\$35. 8 pm at Wortham Center's Cullen Theater, 500 Texas. Tickets/info: 713/524-5050 or www.dacamera.com.

23 & 24 (Fri. & Sat.)

A Man's Piece. Reggie Wilson/Fist & Heel Performance Group begins with *Introduction*, a rhythmic lecture of the hidden rituals of Christians of the African Diaspora. Then, with Big Brick Wilson as choreographer rents at the stereotyped assumptions and pitfalls of being male, drawing from the blues, slave, and spiritual cultures of Africans in the Americas (and Diaspora). Rendering this into a modern context and movement style, he creates what he sometimes calls "post-African/modern dances." \$15. 8 pm at DiverseWorks, 1117 East Fwy, off N. Main at Naylor. For information: 713/335-3445 or www.diverseworks.org.

24 & 25 (Sat. & Sun.)

Mancini at the Movies. This multimedia tribute to Academy Award-winning composer Henry Mancini features the tunesmith's daughter, vocalist Monica Mancini, singing a collection of her father's

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—MON., JAN. 11.**

cherished hits. \$16.50-\$43. 2 pm and 8 pm Saturday, 2 pm Sunday, at Galveston's Grand 1894 Opera House, 2020 Postoffice St. Tickets and info: 409/765-1894, 800/821-1894, or www.thegrand.com.

26 (Mon.)

Jazz, Blues, & Poetry. One of the most highly regarded literary programs in the country, Inprint brings another installment of accomplished writers to the Alley to read from their works. Yusef Komunyakaa and Kevin Young read from their poetry, Komunyakaa's work influenced by his Louisiana upbringing, Vietnam war experience, Young's love poems based on the blues. \$5 (free for students and seniors), 7:30 pm (doors open at 6:45 pm) at the Alley Theatre, 615 Texas Ave. For tickets: 713/521-2026 or www.inprint-inc.org.

29-31 (Thu.-Sat.)

Yippee-Ki-Ay. Riders in the Sky join the Houston Symphony to deliver Texadelic cowboy musical delights for cowpokes of all ages. Recently awarded a Grammy for Best Musical Album for Children, these rustlers round up reflec-

tions of the Old West for the whole family. 7:30 pm Thursday, 8 pm Friday & Saturday at Jones Hall. Tickets/info: 713/224-7575 or www.houstonsymphony.org.

30 & 31 (Fri. & Sat.)

The Oak Ridge Boys. Elvira, A-oom-bop-a-bow-bow. That pretty much says it all. The four-part harmony marked by an earth-rattling basso profundo makes their way to Galveston's Grand 1894 Opera House. Dust off that Stetson and platter-sized belt buckle and sing along to some classic country favorites. \$26-\$56. 7:30 pm at 2020 Postoffice St. For tickets and info: 409/765-1894, 800/821-1894, or www.thegrand.com.

PLANNING AHEAD

FEBRUARY

February 5-8 (Thu.-Sun.)

The Victory Foundation holds its Candidates and Campaigns Training Institute in Tampa, Florida, to shape future GLBT community leaders. For information, call Lucy Bartlett at 202/842-7312 or apply online at www.victoryfoundation.org.

February 6 (Fri.)

The Jacky Terrason Trio features Sean Smith on acoustic bass and native Houstonian and HSPVA grad Eric Harland on drums. Terrason's work brings a fresh approach to jazz, pop standards, and his own compositions, winning him a Victories du Jazz award, the French version of a jazz Grammy. \$25-\$40. 8 pm at Wortham Center's Cullen Theater, 500 Texas at Smith. Tickets/info: 713/524-5050 or www.dacamera.com.

February 6 & 7 (Fri. & Sat.)

Cinderelly, Cinderelly. Orchestra X conductor John Axelrod leads a cast of rising stars through Rossini's *La Cenerentola* (aka *Cinderella*). Ticket price includes dessert and coffee. 7:30 pm at Gerald D. Hines College of Architecture, University of Houston, 4200 Elgin, Entrance 18. Info: 713-225-6729 or www.orchestrax.org.

February 8 (Sun.)

Eggs-ultation. Bayou City Boys Club brings "Rise Up," a gospel and all-you-can-eat brunch that includes bottomless Mimosas and live gospel entertainment. Proceeds benefit the Center for AIDS in memory of community activist Joel Martinez who founded the center and passed away this November. \$35. 11:30 am-2 pm at 1415 California St. For tickets/information: www.bayoucityboysclub.org.

February 9 (Mon.)

Owl of the Desert. In this crime fiction by Ida Swearing-

ton, Kate Porter is just out of prison. On her way to settle the scores with her father and the militia he led, she learns someone has "plans" for her. Murder by the Book hosts a reading and discussion. 6 pm at 2342 Bissonnet.

PERFORMING ARTS

◆ **Bat Boy: The Musical.** Do you need any selling point beyond a title like that? I mean really. Well, if you do need more, West Virginia has been terrorized by a fearsome fangy half-bat, half-boy. His name is Edgar. He yearns to live the life of a normal boy. And he sings. \$25-\$35. Through January 11 at Stages, 3201 Allen Pkwy at Waugh Dr. For tickets and information: 713/527-0123 or www.stagestheatre.com.

◆ **Bright Ideas.** Playwright Eric Coble introduces to Josh and Genevra Bradley, two ambitious, dedicated and successful parents determined to raise the perfect child. But there's a waiting list to get their tyke into the best school in town. In the competitive world of prestigious schools, some parents will kill to get their kid into the best school in town. Literally. \$25-\$35. January 14-February 8 at Stages, 3201 Allen Pkwy at Waugh Dr. For tickets and information: 713/527-0123 or www.stagestheatre.com.

◆ **Dancing in Harlem.** Aaron Callies' story, a song-and-dance celebration of Harlem's early days, promises loads of gut-level entertainment. January 10-February 14, 7 pm, at The Musical Theatre of Houston, 311 W. 18th St. For information: 713/868-2566 or e-mail Curtainup@webtv.net.

◆ **Flower Drum Song.** With a score by Rodgers and Hammerstein and a new book by Tony Award-winner David Henry Hwang (*M. Butterfly*), this story follows the lives of Asians in 1950s America. The production includes such hits as "I Enjoy Being a Girl" and "Grant Avenue" and examines what it means to be an American. January 15-February 1 at the Hobby Center, 800 Bagby at Walker. For tickets: 713/558-TUTS or 1-888-558-3882.

◆ **Jenufa.** Janáček's greatest love story, this tragic drama features two of the greatest singing actresses of our time, sopranos Patricia Racette (as Jenufa) and Catherine Malfitano (as Kostelnicka). In a quiet Moravian village, Jenufa waits to hear if her beloved Steva will be drafted, whose baby she carries in secret. When he rejects her, Jenufa's stepmother, Kostelnicka conspires to marry Jenufa to Steva's half-brother, Laca. \$14 and up. January 23-February 7 at Wortham Center's Brown Theater. Info: www.houstongrandopera.org. →

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CHICKS ROCK!



Patrice Pike (above) and Ellis start their Texas tour in Houston.



Singer/songwriters Patrice Pike and Ellis christen their Texas tour with a go-girls gig in Houston. Pike built up her musical talents with the popular Austin band Sister Seven, who put Pike on stage with the likes of Sarah McLachlan, Natalie Merchant, and Dave Matthews. After the band's breakup, Pike continued with her solo career, touring much of '03 in the Austin City Limits Festival, playing alongside REM, Ben Harper, Ween, and others. • Ellis developed her folk-rock style as vocalist for the six-piece band Bobby Llama. Tireless, she spent her college years intermittently studying, touring regionally with Llama, recording solo work, and performing solo. Her third solo effort, *Everything That's Real* (Rubberneck—her own label) has received critical acclaim. —Eric Dieckman

What: Patrice Pike and Ellis

When: January 21, 9 p.m.

Where: Rhythm Room, 1815 Washington Ave.

How much? \$8 **Info:** www.gogirlsmusic.com

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ALL WET

Why Do the Children Rust? takes a look at some basic facts. The earth is two-thirds water; the human body is 70% water. So why do the children rust? It's hard to say, but nobody can take a stab at such an obtuse question like bobbindoctrin puppet theatre. Not for the kiddies or the faint of heart, bobbindoctrin dives into the deep using murky, inventive approaches using a broad production approach of expression. Projection art, shadow puppetry, marionettes, hand puppets, and live actors move about seamlessly in these tales of a madman saved from evil spirits by melted dollies in the trees, 100 Victorian matrons condemned to trudge through miles of kelp, and wily gay '70s adventures aboard the Love Boat, rife with moustaches galore. —ED

What: Why Do the Children Rust?
When: January 9–24, 8 & 9:30 p.m.
Where: Helios, 411 Westheimer
How much? \$6–\$8, \$5 opening weekend
Info: 713/526-7434 or
www.bobbindoctrin.org

BULMAR MIRZA

♦ **The Last Five Years.** This intensely personal look at the relationship between a writer and an actress is told from both points of view, goes against the grain of the usual musical theater formulas and ushers in a unique musical score. January 7–February 14, 5 & 8 pm at Theater LaB Houston, 1706 Alamo. Tickets: 713/868-7516.

♦ **The Magic Flute.** Mozart's captivating favorite tells the story of Princess Pamina and Prince Tamino, who falls in love with her. \$19 and up. January 30–February 15 @ Wortham Theater Center's Brown Theater, Texas Ave. at Smith St. For information: 713/228-OPERA, 1-800-62-OPERA, or www.houstongrandopera.org.

♦ **Manon Lescaut.** Puccini's passionate opera, based on French novelist's Abbe' Prevost 1731 work, made him famous. See why. \$20–\$30. January 29–February 7 @ Lambert Hall, 1703 Heights Blvd. For tickets: 713/861-5303 or www.operaintheheights.org.

♦ **Oh, Boy!** This 1917 musical is set at the end of the Edwardian Era and the dawn of the Roaring Twenties. The comical story of romantic marital mix-ups and mistaken identity features Main Street fave Joel Sandel. \$20–30. Through January 17 at Main Street Theater (Chelsea Market), 4617 Montrose Blvd. Tickets/info: 713/524-6706 or www.mainstreettheater.com.

♦ **Our Country: The History of Country Music.** The history of America and the history of country music are both documented and paralleled in this visually stunning IMAX film. Historical footage is edited with breathtaking images of the mountains of Appalachia, the Grand Ole Opry, and the deserts of California. Featured artists include Dolly Parton, retro-country boys Asleep at the Wheel, Guy Clark, Loretta Lynn, and Houston's own Lyle Lovett. Through June 7 at the Houston Museum of Natural Science. For information: 713/639-4629 or www.hmns.org.

♦ **Proof.** The Pulitzer Prize- and Tony Award-winning

play focuses on a young woman who finds her father's notebook. Her father, a genius mathematician has left behind a mathematical proof whose impact could have enormous implications. *Proof* is a mystery, a love story, and a pleasure for the mind. January 9–February 1 at The Alley's Neuhaus Stage, 615 Texas Ave. For tickets and information: 713/228-8421 or www.alleytheatre.org.

♦ **Romantic Comedy.** On his wedding day, Jason Carmichael meets the love of his life. Imagine the surprise of his bride-to-be that the love of his life is not her. Through January 17 at The Company Onstage, 536 Westbury Square. For tickets: 713/726-1219.

♦ **Spring Fieldwork.** Several Dancers Core and the Houston Community College Central Dance Department, in conjunction with The Field (a NY-based artist service organization) meets for 10 weekly sessions of works-in-progress and artist feedback. \$50/10-week session. Begins Wednesday, January 28, 7–9 pm in Studio A at 3517 Austin, HCC central campus. For information: 713/862-5530 or sdcinfo@mindspring.com.

♦ **TEXAS: The Big Picture.** Anyone who's Texas-proud and is looking to convert a few unbelievers will find this Texacentric film handy. Narrated by native Texan Colby Donaldson (of *Survivor: The Australian Outback*) who grew up on a ranch in the small town of Christoval in West Texas, *TEXAS* portrays the Lone Star State in all its cinematic beauty, from her rugged mountains to her serene plains to her majestic city skylines and all her diverse inhabitants therein. Through June 7 at the Houston Museum of Natural Science. For information: 713/639-4629 or www.hmns.org.

the United States. In this dizzying dance of brotherly love and hate, the balance of power keeps changing, with their ability to harm each other unending—they aren't named Lincoln and Booth for nothing. Through February 15 at The Alley's Neuhaus Stage, 615 Texas Ave. For tickets and information: 713/228-8421 or www.alleytheatre.org.

♦ **A Tuna Christmas** returns to Galveston's Grand 1894 Opera House. A Texas countrified version of *A Night Before Christmas*, Tuna brings original cast members Jason Williams and Tony Award-nominee Joe Sear's with their mess-o-kooky characters in Tuna, Texas, where the "Lion's Club is too liberal and Patsy Cline never dies." \$11–\$48. January 6–11 at the Grand 1894 Opera House, 2020 Postoffice St. For tickets and info: 409/765-1894, 800/821-1894, or www.thegrand.com.

PERFORMING ARTS

For Young People

♦ **Santa's Toy Shop** finds troubling goings-on at the North Pole. With Santa frightfully slow in his toy production, Mrs. Claus and the elves make plans to save Christmas and the hopes of little children around the globe. Through January 10 at The Company Onstage, 536 Westbury Square, 713/726-1219.

♦ **The Snow Queen.** The iniquitous Snow Queen has separated Gerda and Kai. Gerda risks everything to rescue Kai from the Snow Queen's ice palace in this tale of love and redemption adapted from the Hans Christian Andersen fairy tale. January 24–March 6 at The Company Onstage, 536 Westbury Square, 713/726-1219.

♦ **The Velveteen Rabbit.** Houston Grand Opera's Opera to Go! presents HGO's 30th world premiere, the endearing children's tale written in 1922 of the little velveteen rabbit who wishes to become real through

the love of the boy who plays with him. \$4. January 20–30 at the Heinen Theater, Houston Community College, 3517 Austin. For tickets: 713/546-0230.

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

♦ **The Art History Notebooks of Carolyn Iorio** reveal the artist's distinctive method of note-taking during her student days. Her form of cognitive mapping of ideas and objects can in itself create compelling visuals and visual documents. Her exhibit runs in conjunction with David McGee's *Tetelestai: Notebooks of the Black Sea*. Free. Through February 7 at DiverseWorks, 1117 East Fwy, off N. Main at Naylor. Info: 713/335-3445 or www.diverseworks.org.

♦ **Grass.** Heather Ackroyd and Dan Harvey use grass as a photographic medium, so much that they collaborated with the Institute of Grassland and Environmental Research to develop a genetically engineered strain of grass called SO-GREEN (copyright) that can hold the artists' work for years rather than a few weeks like standard grasses. The two will use this untraditional medium to create a site-specific installation at Rice University Art Gallery. The opening reception includes a gallery talk with the artists at 6 pm. Free. January 22–February 29 at Rice Gallery, Sewall Hall, Entrance 1. Info: 713/348-6069 or www.ricegallery.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. Through February 29, 2004, @ the Menil Collection, 1515 Sul Ross. Info: 713/524-9400 or www.menil.org.

♦ **Passport to the Universe.** This is not the dinky star show you went to as a kid. Academy Award-winner Tom Hanks narrates this full-dome, high-definition video at the Burke Baker Planetarium. *Passport to the Universe* brings you close-up views of star fields and planets through a virtual re-creation of our universe. Take the kids, bring the visiting relatives, or treat yourself to something just as entertaining as it is educational. \$5 (\$3.50 kids 3–11 & seniors 62+). At the Houston Museum of Natural Science. Info: 713/639-4629 or www.hmns.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 processional and religious ceremony. Through January 25, 2004, @ the Menil Collection, 1515 Sul Ross. For information: 713/524-9400 or www.menil.org.

♦ **Tetelestai: Notebooks of the Black Sea.** Houston-based painter David McGee examines contemporary racial complexities using techniques and imagery of 16th–18th-century painting. His work draws from inspirations as disparate as Bob Dylan, Cornell West, and Tupac Shakur. Through February 7 at DiverseWorks, 1117 East Fwy, off N. Main at Naylor. Info: 713/335-3445 or www.diverseworks.org. ■

Heaven Knows

continued from page 77

Aquarius

Saturn. Getting your office or workplace organized is your goal for this year. Disorder and chaos will have to live elsewhere.

At work, you are very likely to be put in charge of this task. Make sure that you have the company's authority and power for the changes you want to make, or you will be made the scapegoat. And be careful about taking on this task if you don't have those things. In your personal life, you are interested in getting your health

in order. This will be a great time for improved health regimes and exercise programs. You will have this sense of inner discipline for the entire year.

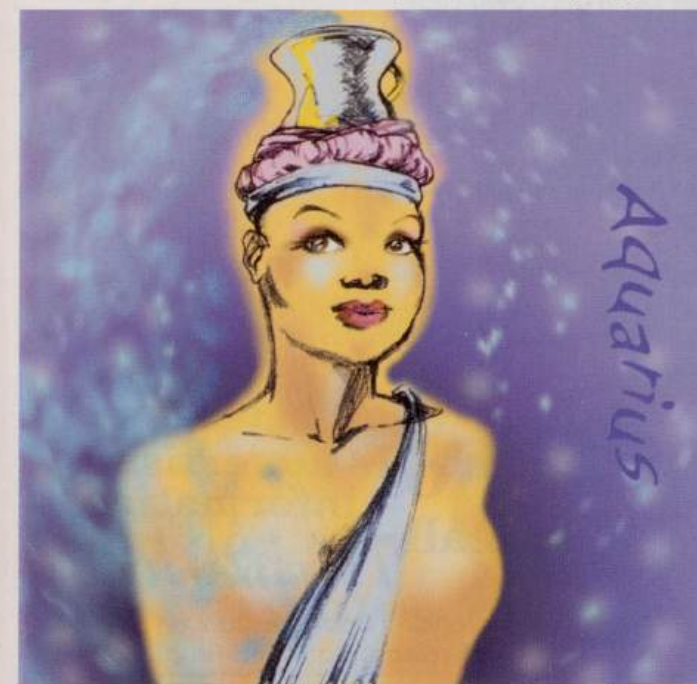
Uranus. With your ruling planet, Uranus, moving into Pisces, you are finding all sorts of new and latent talents and resources that you had hidden away from yourself. This can be a super year if you are willing to go beyond what you are familiar and comfortable with and explore all new options. Routine will create boredom and can distract from your path. You will also want to be viewed differently by relationship partners. And it would help if they would notice your uniqueness on their own. This is also a time when you are expanding your circle of friends. You may have lost some close friends in the last year. Now you are ready to find some new ones.

Neptune. Neptune has been visiting your sign since 1998, slowly making her way through. She is having her most profound influence on those of you born February 1–5 and those fortunate enough to have planets in those degrees. This is probably one of the most life-altering transits you will ever have, a time of spiritual pilgrimage. You need to get away from all expectations placed on

you by society, family, and your own demands. And you are looking for that place where you don't have to be anything to anyone. You can only do things that first feed you internally. Duties and expectations cannot be fulfilled unless they come from your universal center. Sometimes people hide from this by seeking behavior that takes them away from the feelings. Ultimately, you are looking to fill a hole that only a journey inward can do.

Pluto. Your base of friends is going through a time of transformation. You are losing some old friends and gaining some new ones. And this is not an easy thing for you, because you don't allow many people into your life. Friends must have lofty principles and want to continue to grow and seek integrity. You may be drawn to organizations that seek to dispel recalcitrant cultural conceptions. You will want to aggressively expose these false beliefs. One way to do this is through education, lecturing, or even writing. You will meet with resistance since this undermines the very values that society has built itself upon. In work, your company is going through a purging of false doctrines. The real values will come to the surface.

continued on page 95



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Business News



BIG SMILE. On November 7, Randy Mitchmore, D.D.S., of LifeSmiles supported the nonprofit organization Smiles for Diversity by offering a free teeth-whitening procedure to each patient making a \$200 contribution (who included Kim Gustavsson, in the chair). Smiles for Diversity educates children about hate and cultural misunderstanding. LifeSmiles is located at 2617 W. Holcombe, Suite E. The phone number is 713/592-9300, and the website is www.lifesmiles.us.



CLOTHES CALL. On October 9, Jerry Hall (c), in town starring in The Graduate, stopped by the opening event at Couture, the new clothing boutique owned by Alicia Smith (l) and Todd Ramos. Couture is located at 1714 Post Oak Boulevard. The phone number is 713/840-1231.

Charles Armstrong, owner of South Beach, JR's Bar & Grill, and Montrose Mining Company, received an award from the Houston Museum District Business Alliance for the combination of customer parking and landscape design around his clubs.



SAAB STORY. Spotted in the crowd at the opening of Performance Saab on October 30: Saab controller Karen Hannan, Performance Saab owner Bob Heckerroth, and Saab USA president Debra Kelly-Ennis. During November, the dealership donated \$20 for every test drive to CanCare, the nonprofit group that serves cancer survivors and their families. Performance Saab is located at 10505 Southwest Frwy. The phone number is 713/981-4400.

Mikel Reper, interior designer and owner of Environments in Houston, has opened Nest, a new retail store in Galveston with home furnishings and



Mikel Reper's Nest in Galveston.

more. In his loft-type space, Reper offers an array of items for people, their homes, and even their pets. He has a Galveston-area exclusive on several skin-care lines, including Nickel for men. The address is 525 22nd St., and the phone number is 409/763-5415.

Michael Malik, owner of M2M Fashion and Jeans Couture, has opened M's Liquors, a new wine-and-spirits emporium. The address is 1232 Westheimer. The phone number is 713/524-2510.

Michael Delaney has joined Prudential Financial as a financial services associate. His office is located at 1233 W. Loop South, Suite 1100. His phone number is 713/960-5081, ext. 6135, and his e-mail address is michael.delaney@prudential.com. ■

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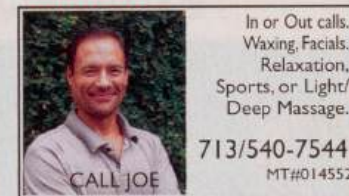


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BAR & CLUB GUIDE

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 of 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 • 832/754-4115.

CHANCES/THE NEW BARN/G-SPOT

This three-in-one women's bar provides a place to two-step, rock, or chat. Check out the 9 p.m.-1 a.m. open mic night on Thursday. Women-fronted bands perform every Saturday. 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 TOYZ

Latin house, hip hop, salsa, and merengue flavor this Southwest Houston nightclub. On Friday, Cookie LaCook hosts Ladies Night catering to the over-25 African American lesbian crowd. 5322 Glenmont • 713/668-4892.

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 bootie music, marks the end of the week. 2612 South Richey • 713/944-7663.

BEHIND THE BAR

WHO: Robert Harwood

WHERE: Keys West (817 West Dallas, 713/571-7870)

WHAT'S UP: Greet Harwood at the Jan. 11 Don Gill-hosted benefit "Believe," which will raise funds for the Resurrection Metropolitan Community Church-led effort to build a Habitat for Humanity house.



THOMAS CHELSEA

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.

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 Gifford 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 last 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 of 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 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.

PEARL

Promoter Eduardo Elizondo now hosts a Thursday gay night at this swanky new club in the downtown club district. Hop on the

Metro train and head north. 310 Main • 713/528-5736 • www.pearlhouston.com.

PRIVE

The patio of 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-chic 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 (7623) • www.SouthBeachTheNightclub.com.

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.

Have bar or club news?

Send it to clubguide@outsmartmagazine.com.

Heaven Knows continued from page 85

Pisces (February 19-March 20)



Jupiter. Relationships are highlighted as Jupiter makes her way through your solar seventh house of partnerships, companions, and cooperation. If you are in a relationship, this will improve current conditions and bring a sense of profound renewal. If you are single, this may very well bring someone into your life. It will be an easy relationship, as you will both have much in common. Your partner(s) will approach life in a more down-to-earth manner, and that will help you ground your own abilities. After September, Jupiter moves into your solar eighth house as you take relationships to the next level. You will seek deeper intimacies, not wanting any blocks in your way to prevent total understanding between you and others. Loans, investments, and other's resources are more available to you after this time.

Saturn. Creative you may be, but you will need to find structured and tangible ways to birth this process. Just imagining these things is not good enough for you. And you will want others to judge your art. Of course, they will find it wonderful, but you are not so sure as you give physical form to your inner creative spirit. You are more playful but in a constructive way. Even in your romantic relationships, you will want to encourage the friendship between you and your romantic partner, finding activities that bring this out in you both. If you have children, they are becoming more mature and finding their own way. And this is the signal for you to take better care of your inner child. Take her out to play.

Uranus. Uranus enters your sign for the first time in 84 years. Unless you have been around a while, this is going to be a whole new experience for you. This will be like you taking the shuttle to the moon. You have new ground to explore, and nothing and no one will stand in your way. Any thing or person who attempts to hold you back will end up in the pages of your history. You will challenge all previous images of yourself. Some will see you as courageous, and others will see you as a revolutionary. You will seek a new career path, new relationships, and new versions of you. Be prepared. You will rock the boat.

Lilly Roddy has been a professional astrologer for more than 20 years. She counsels individuals in personal, business, and financial matters and teaches classes in astrology. On January 9, Roddy will forecast 2004 in greater detail during a 7:30-9 p.m. lecture at the LaQuinta Inn, 4015 Southwest Frwy. The fee is \$20 per person. More info: 713/529-5842 or Lillycath@aol.com.



**Kick-off Party for Misty Valdez
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As the month opens, there is a lot of activity. Jupiter goes retrograde on the 3rd, and Mercury goes direct on the 6th. Jupiter represents views on culture, education, and personal growth. The retrograde period will give people a chance to look more closely at these things. And with Mercury direct on the 6th, that should make all those New Year's resolutions easier to fulfill this year. Get them started after the 8th for real success. • Good days of the month are the 9th, 14th, 15th, 20th, 29th, and 31st. Not-so-good days are the 1st, 3rd, 5th, 6th, 7th, and 21st. The Full Moon is on the 7th in Cancer, emphasizing family, national, and emotional security. The New Moon is on the 21st in Aquarius. This will stimulate us to be more social and to be more group conscious.

ARIES (March 21–April 19). This month you feel very motivated and goal-oriented. You can turn this energy toward career or your New Year's resolutions. People will find you in a no-nonsense mood. Everything will have to fit into your plan and have a purpose or it will be out on the curb waiting for heavy-trash day. You are especially action-oriented to the point of appearing rude. Your family will offer the greatest resistance to your plans.

TAURUS (April 20–May 20). You are a bit more laid back than usual. And your life and loves are moving along nicely without a lot of effort on your part. And it is natural at this time for you to want to retreat far from the madding crowd. You may think that your energy level is low, but you are just recharging, not wanting to waste your efforts. Career will be the most confusing this month. You are dissatisfied but not sure exactly what you want to do. Avoid making permanent choices at this time.

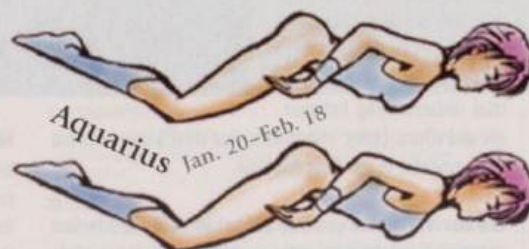
GEMINI (May 21–June 21). You are really keeping score this month. Normally you just adapt past and over others, not really wanting to create conflict. But this year, starting with this month, you are not letting things just go by. In relationships, you will really want to have something in common to share and not just the time you spend apart. And you are very restless with your career. You have to find something new or recreate yourself where you are.

CANCER (June 22–July 22). You are going to be the sign this time that makes the New Year's resolutions, sticks to them, or beats yourself up because you didn't. And yes, you are more crabby than usual. Criticism hurts more than usual. Make sure you are choosing the best people to critique you. Relationship partners have the most power over you this month. You are very motivated

at work, and after January 8, you have the all-clear to start new projects, both long- and short-term.

LEO (July 23–August 22). This month, you are the advice giver, organizer, parent, and judge/jury at work. Make sure you take along enough outfits for all the parts you are playing with. Your motto for January is a place for everything and everything in its place. And what a great time this is to start a new health regime or exercise program. New relationship potentials turn your head at the end of the month. Take time to check their references, as there will be plenty of sheep in wolves clothing.

VIRGO (August 23–September 22). Can you say "busy," Ms./Mr. Rodgers? And can there be too much detail for the virgins to analyze? Bring on that second helping. Some of you will begin



to feel trapped by all the projects you have taken on. Relationships will be the first place you will be trimming the fat. And you have lots of creative ideas and solutions to help you through this entire month. You are charming and effective.

LIBRA (September 23–October 23). We are seeing your New Year's resolutions showing up at home first, work second, relationships third, and you in the fourth spot. This is a month to deal with home, family, emotional, and monetary security. People, things, and emotions will have to have a generative function in your life; otherwise, spring cleaning comes early for you. Relationships are just a bit too honest and confrontational for you this month. You are more interested in an adventure with someone energizing.

SCORPIO (October 24–November 21). You are very interested in getting your ideas and views across in a clear and concise manner this month. And you will need reassurance from others that they are "hearing" you. Others may take this as unnecessary probing. You are picking up mixed signals from them, but these are really not about you. They are just thinking about other things as you talk to them. And what a great month this is for getting organized. You will have plenty of work to do around the old home place.

SAGITTARIUS (November 22–December 21). January is a very mixed bag of activities. You are interested in taking care of details and getting everything just right. And you feel so trapped by all the projects you have taken on. You just want to throw your computer and filing cabinet out the window. You are wondering just who you are doing all this for and if they really care. This is a time when family and unconscious emotional drive will be extricated from your life. You will have more freedom, but you will be left with a sense of what do you want to do. Oh... just take a trip.

CAPRICORN (December 22–January 19). This is your birthday time when you are considering what you accomplished last year and contemplating just what you are going to do next year. After the 8th, Mercury will be ready to help you on with your decisions. Relationships will play a much stronger role in your life this year. And the first thing to do is to decide if you have the partner who fits your life at this time. Changes will occur in this area. And you want your life to be more intrinsically and spiritually complete. There are a lot of big questions for this month.

AQUARIUS (January 20–February 18). This is the month for retreat and reflection for you. You are ready to take a break from the holiday parties and hoopla that filled your December. And now you are more sensitive than usual, looking to dim the lights, untangle the knot, dull the knife, and blend with the dust. You are feeling the pressure from those around you to get on with and make some suggestions. But you are not ready. After the 21st and the new moon, you are more ready but cautious. This next year is the Chinese Year of the Monkey. Keep your choices flexible, as you will need to be malleable.

PISCES (February 19–March 20). Some of you are ready to be grounded and finally make a choice about the new quest that is facing you. Be sure to seek out friends and cohorts, as they will be your best counsel this month. A new friend may enter your life at this time. And if he does, he will be around for many years. You have done much separation over the last two years from your previous self. You will begin the process of rebuilding. Romantic relationships are all around you, as long as you make time for them in your life.

Lilly Roddy gives her annual astrological forecast for the year beginning on page 38.



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1 Surrounded by friends, **Sylvia Cervantes** (in the center, in the gray jacket) and **Rose Mary Trejo** (in the red turtleneck) celebrated their fourteenth anniversary and Rosemary's birthday on Nov. 11 at Meteor.



2 **Chierie Landry** (l) and **Richard Boetsch** attended the Houston Women's Festival after party at Chances on Oct. 25.



3 On Oct. 23, **Wayne Besen** read from his new book *Anything But Straight: Unmasking the Scandals and Lies Behind the Ex-Gay Myth* at the Houston GLBT Community Center.



4 **Tiffany Shelton** (l) joined **Daniel Curry** at his Sept. 7 birthday party at Farrago, where he is manager.



5 On Nov. 14, **Alton LaDay** (r), director of marketing and design services at the Decorative Center Houston, presented several boxes of designer fabric samples to New Covenant Christian Church minister **Todd Williams** and church member **Peggy Barr**. The congregation, which worships at the Houston GLBT Community Center, will use the fabric in its weekly quilting group, Mending and Stitching.



6 **Sally Huffer** (front row, l) and **Jerel McNeil** (front row, r) displayed facsimile checks given to H.A.T.C.H. and the Colt 45's Stone Soup Food Pantry representing donations made at Lockdown, the Sept. 14 Misfits of Houston event at the downtown club Rehab.

1-3 YVONNE FEECE; 4, 5, 6 DALTON DEHART; 5 TIM BROOKOVER; 7 JEFF FITLOW; 9-10 DAVID LEWIS



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