

DECEMBER 2004

Houston's gay, lesbian, bi, and trans magazine

Out ▼ Smart

“The arc of the
moral
universe
is long,
but it bends
toward
justice.”

— Dr. Martin Luther King Jr.

Where do we go from here? Two red-state activists
comment on post-election America and urge action.

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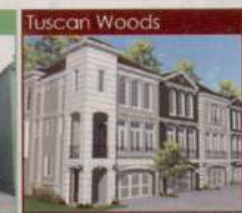
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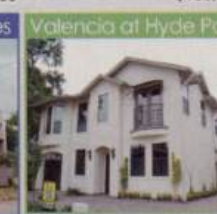
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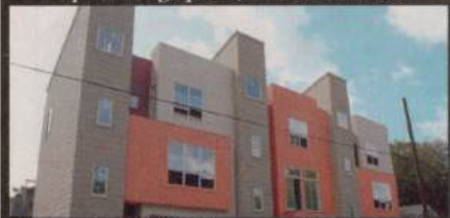
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CONTENTS

Vol. 11 • No. 11 • DECEMBER 2004

News & Comment

- 8 **Letters**
- 16 **News Briefs** Coping with holiday blues, *Noah's Arc* screening, more.
- 20 **LeftOut**/Wayne Besen How Dems treat GLBT issues determines party's future.
- 21 **OutRight**/Dale Carpenter Federalism offers way to cope with religious revival.
- 24 **InsideOut at City Hall**/Annie D. Parker New police leader has strong GLBT rep.
- 26 **GenerationOut**/H.A.T.C.H. writer A young writer heads home for the holidays.

Features

- 10 **OutFront** A Hanukkah party, the kindest cut, and Christmas Gone Wild.
Photographs by Kelly Catchings & John Conroy
- 28 **COVER FEATURE** **The Day After** Waking up to the new reality, a local activist stresses need to educate red-state America about our lives. By Anita Renteria
- 32 **COVER FEATURE** **A New World** Post election, a seasoned observer surveys the changed political territory and plots action. By Wayne Besen
- 40 **Share the Wealth** Community groups need holiday gifts, too. This year, we feature PWA Holiday Charities. By Joe Milano
- 42 **The DIFFA Difference** After 20 years and \$31 million, the national organization—and its Houston chapter—continues to raise money for the HIV/AIDS fight. By Joe Milano
- 44 **Down Mérida Way** Houston couple opens Yucatan B&B retreat. By Brian Martinez
- 50 **Check Up: Stephen Stein** The symphony conductor is a rabbi. By Eric A.T. Dieckman

Arts & Entertainment

- 54 **LookOut**/Tim Brookover 'Tis the season for benefits and toy drives.
- 56 **Queer Quotes**/Blase DiStefano Jon Stewart, Ellen DeGeneres, more.
- 58 **DVD/VHS** The first season of *The L Word*, plus *The Golden Girls*, *The Stepford Wives*, *Bulgarian Lovers*, more. By Troy Carrington, Eric A.T. Dieckman, Suzie Lynde
- 62 **Television**/Blase DiStefano Openly gay president of Showtime, more.
- 66 **GrooveOut**/Gregg Shapiro Make the season gay with musical gifts by queer artists. Plus reviews/previews of gay grooves from Rufus Wainwright, Shania Twain, Linda Ronstadt, Transcendence Gospel Choir, many more. By Tim Brookover, Troy Carrington, Suzie Lynde, Andrea Rodricks, Lance Scott Walker
- 72 **ReadOut**/Tim Brookover Two local authors and their new books. Plus reviews of *Hot Target*, *Last Song of Dusk*, and *This Is Delicious!*
By Eric A.T. Dieckman, Joe Milano, Andrea Rodricks

Out & About

- 74 **OutLoud**/Sally Sheklow A mattress.
- 76 **DineOut**/Tim Brookover Niko Niko's.
- 78 **Out of Town**/David Eduardo Flores Perez
Traveling in "banned" states.
- 80 **Calendar** Holiday happenings.
- 94 **Bar/Club Guide** Jerome Downey of Galveston's Robert's LaFitte.
- 96 **SignOut**/Lilly Roddy
- 98 **SceneOut**

Advertisers' Index

- 88 **Business News**
- 90 **Classifieds**
- 92 **OutSmart Advertisers**

OutSmart
"The arc of the moral universe is long, but it bends toward justice."
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The Martin Luther King Jr. quote is from his 1967 speech, "Where Do We Go from Here?"
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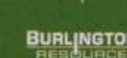
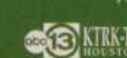


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Letters

MORE MOVIES

I always enjoy your magazine and know most of the staff personally. Great job.

Just wanted to let you know that the November issue "What Do I Do Now?" [News Briefs] failed to list Black Hawk Leather [711 Fairview, 713/522-1414] as a source for adult movies. I wanted you to know for future references, as oversights do happen.

Again, thanks for supplying the community with a great publication. I always look forward to receiving it. We are glad we can be a drop-off point so our many customers can pick up their copies here when they are getting their videos.

Bob Houghton

Kim Zigler

co-owners, Black Hawk Leather
Houston

OUTSIDE PARTY LINES

In Daryl Moore's [monthly] hit on any breathing Republican—this time, Tom Delay—he finally has a case ["Left Out," November 2004]. Tom Delay, like many politicians who spend too much time in D.C., should go.

The problem I have with Moore's unrelenting attempt to assault Republicans is that he wouldn't care less about Delay if he were a Democrat. I bet the ethics violations by former House Speaker Dick Gephardt regarding failure to pay luxury taxes on a second home wouldn't keep Moore from endorsing Gephardt.

It's too bad politicians like Ted Kennedy, a senator since 1961, and others can last a whole career in Washington and never have a real job. . . .

If you aren't willing to criticize members of your own party, Daryl, then your credibility has no foundation.

Mike Crowe

Houston

OUR CONTRIBUTORS

Photographer John Conroy has launched a redesigned, expanded website, www.varsityproductions.com.

CORRECTION

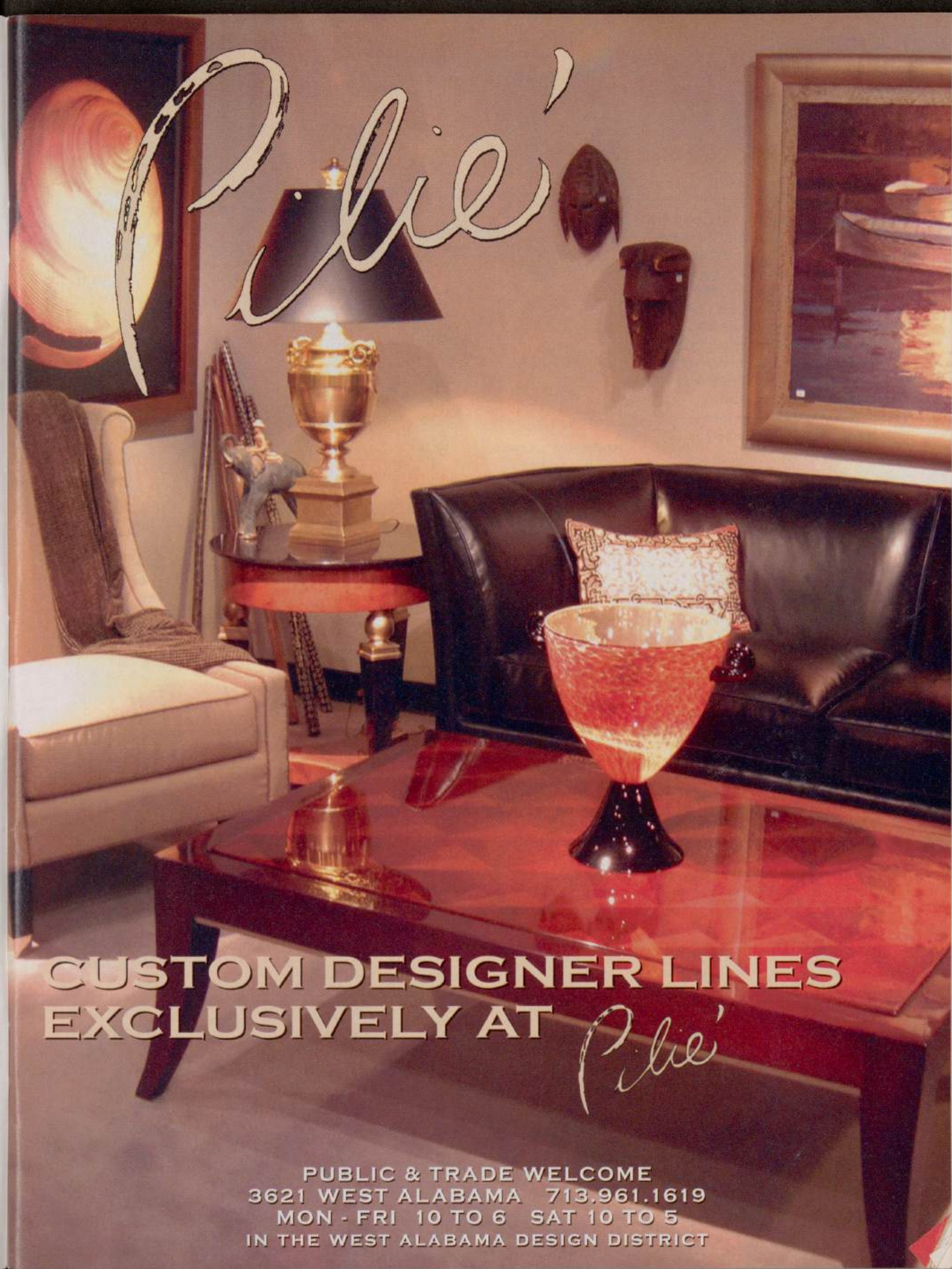
By press time for the October issue, we were not able to identify the workplace of Eileen Ledgerwood, one of the runners-up for best female bartender in our Gayest & Greatest coverage ["The Votes Are In"]. She works at Decades.

ATTENTION, COMMUNITY ORGANIZATIONS

We are updating the community resource guide section for our new and improved website. Please send information about your nonprofit, fundraising, or social organization to editor@outsmartmagazine.com. Provide a current contact name and information (include mailing address, e-mail address, and telephone number) along with a brief description of your group. The revised resource guide will appear soon at www.outsmartmagazine.com.

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LET IT POUR. On December 11, expect some holiday high jinks at the first Hanukkah champagne party thrown by the Jewish Gay & Lesbian Social Group at Meteor. President Sandy Brauer (r) and board member Barry Mandel certainly got into the festive spirit at our photo shoot. By the way, they are wearing new T-shirt designs from Jewcy, the cheeky New York-based website (www.jewcy.com) that promises "kosher-style fabulousity." The social group, which formed this year, is affiliated with the Jewish Community Center Houston.

Photographed by Kelly Catchings



Karen Derr
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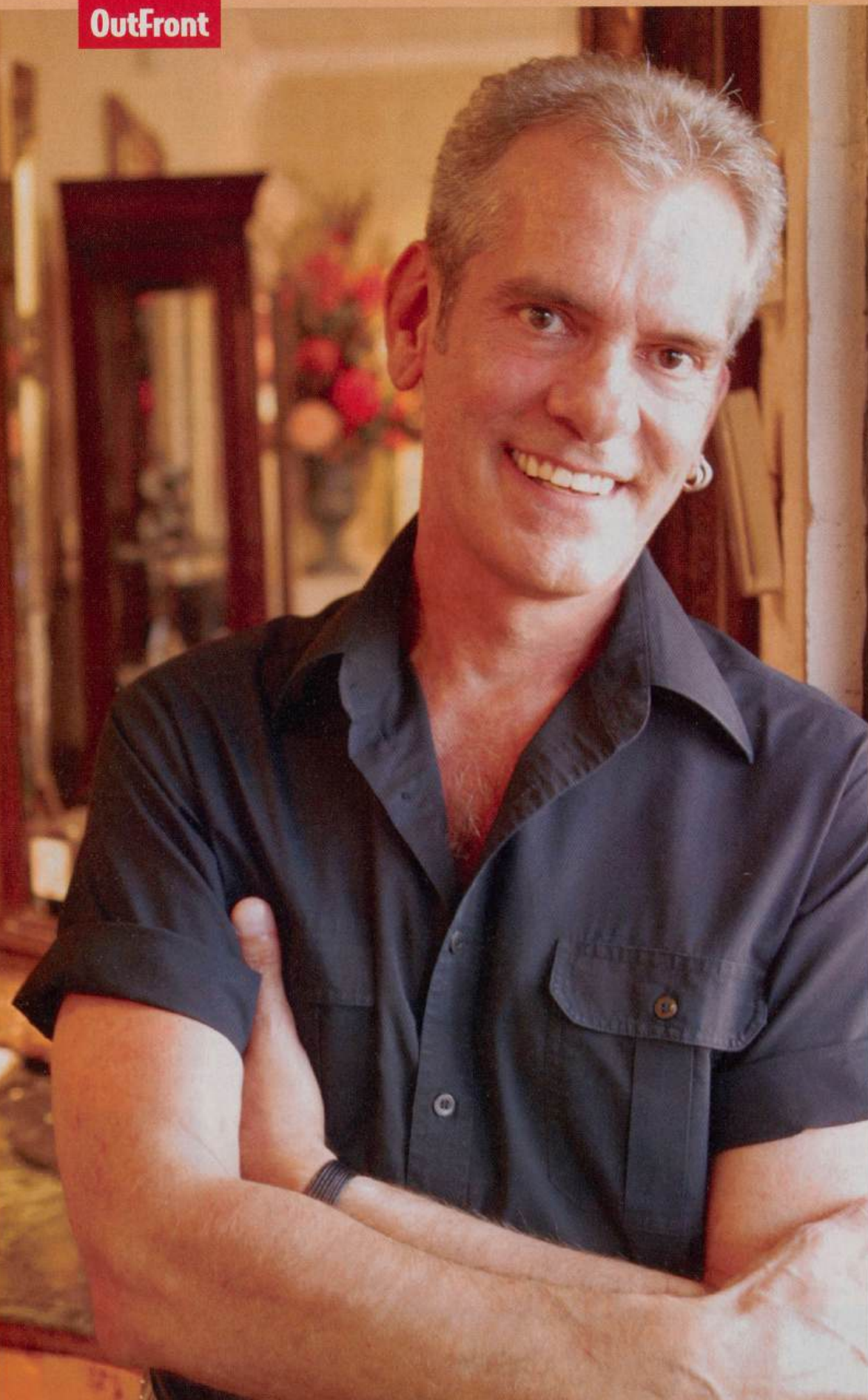


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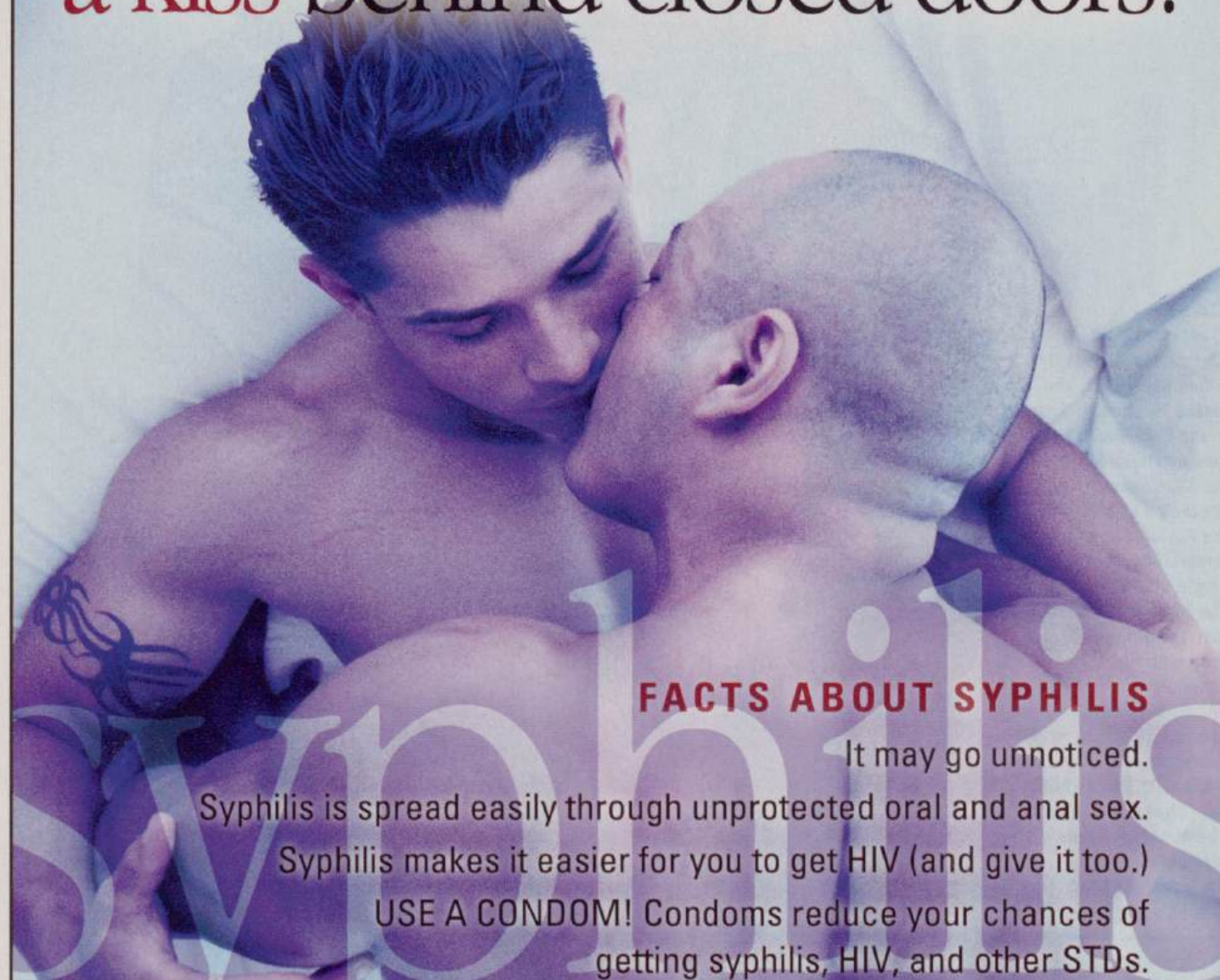
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SHEAR JOY. Bob Pavey, owner of Timeless Hair, provides free haircuts for people living with HIV/AIDS on the second Monday of the month. He is assisted by six other stylists, including some who work for other local salons. Bering Support Network organizes the program. Pavey (photographed in his salon on West Alabama) and his fellow volunteers provide the service, but he says they also reap rewards from their work with these clients. "When the haircutters leave here," he says, "we're all on cloud nine."

Photographed by John Conroy

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CAMP CHRISTMAS. Christopher Garrett (l-r), Lillian Devereaux, and Jackie Thorne will appear in the December 11 holiday show *All I Want For Christmas Is You!* presented by the Empire of the Royal Sovereign and Imperial Court of the Single Star at Keys West. The three performers, along with the cast of drag queens and community entertainers, will then move to Michael's Outpost for the late-night show *Christmas Gone Wild*. Proceeds from both shows will benefit The Assistance Fund medication program and the Montrose Clinic women's program.

Photographed by Kelly Catchings



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DATEBOOK

• **Q-Patrol** board meets Dec. 4, 5 p.m., at the Houston GLBT Community Center to consider the future of the organization. The public is invited. Info: 713/528-SAFE, QpatrolHouston@yahoo.com.

• On Dec. 4, **Houston Gay & Lesbian Parents** holds its annual gingerbread house construction and decoration event, 2-4 p.m., at St. Stephen's Episcopal Church. Details: www.hglp.org.

• At **Palmer Memorial Episcopal Church**, theologian and author Dr. L. Michael White speaks on "What Does the Bible Really Say About Homosexuality?" on Dec. 9, 7 p.m. Christ Church Cathedral cosponsors. Register: 713/592-6196, ext. 101.

• **GLBT Behavioral Health Coalition** meets on Dec. 17, 9-11 a.m., at Bering Support Network. Daniel Garces will speak on "Working with GLBT Families." Info: Christopher Kerr, M.Ed., LPC, 713/529-0037.

• **Just For Us**, the Houston Gay & Lesbian Parents group for older youth, plays laser tag game on Dec. 18, 8-10 a.m., at Laser Quest. \$15-\$20. RSVP: Glenda Redworth, glenda@hglp.org.

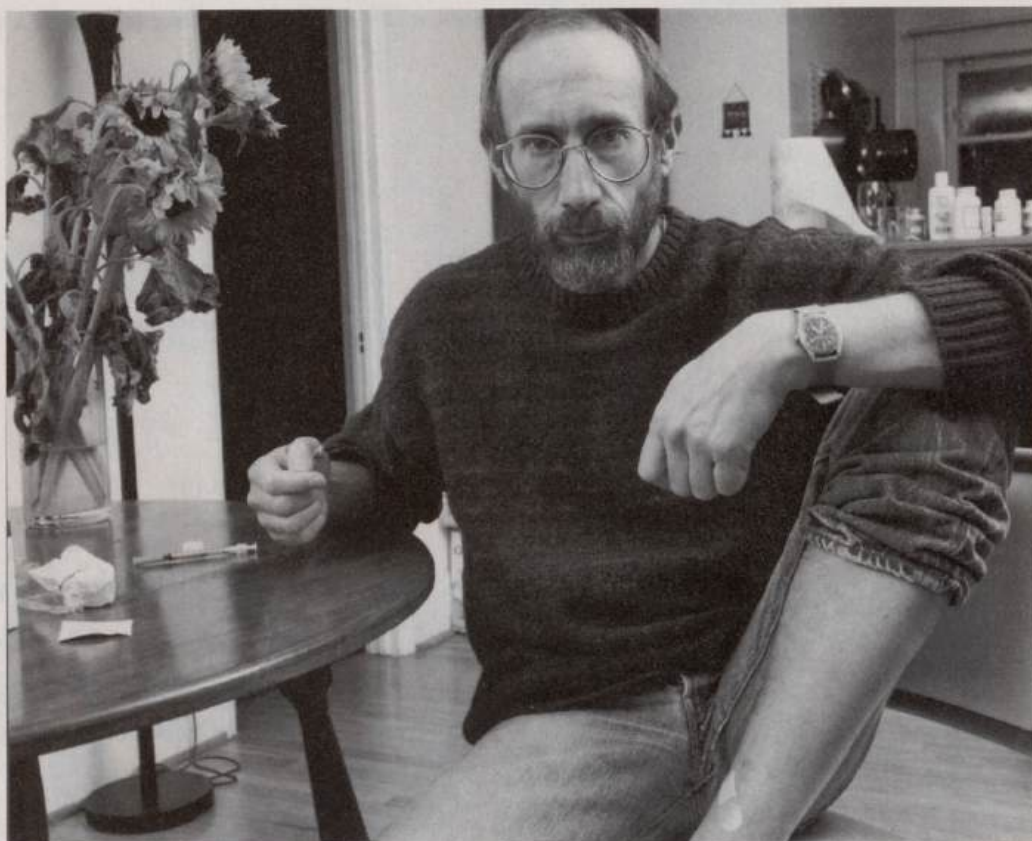
• **Metropolitan Community Church-Galveston Feasibility Team** meets in December (date not determined at press time) to consider the formation of an MCC congregation on the Island. Info: www.galvestonmcc.org.

• **Montrose Social Group** now meets Thursdays, 7:30 p.m., at Bering Memorial United Methodist Church, Room 201. Info: info@msgshouston.org.

• **Out Together**, Houston chapter of the Straight Spouse Network, a support organization for current and former heterosexual partners of GLBT individuals, meets weekly at Café Express on Kirby. Info: Bob Clark, 713/667-1535, bobtx@aol.com; www.outtogether.org.

• Celebrate the **Houston Public Library** centennial by reading Dorothy Allison's *Bastard Out of Carolina*, one of the 100 favorite titles selected by the librarians. Review the complete list: www.houstonlibrary.org. ■

I AM A CAMERA



The exhibition *Identifying Marks: Contemporary Portraits* at the Houston Center for Photography includes the work of Los Angeles photographer Albert J. Winn, whose autobiographical series *My Life Until Now* documents his life as a gay, Jewish man living with HIV. This photo is *Self Portrait with Syringe*. The exhibition remains on view through December 19.

LAWYERS AID PWAs



AIDS Project's (l-r) Sandra Wicoff, Tom Anthony, and Veronica F. Jacobs at the Houston Volunteer Lawyers Program office downtown.

Since September, the nonprofit Houston Volunteer Lawyers Program has offered once-monthly legal clinics for people living with HIV. Individuals who qualify can obtain assistance with estate-planning documents, Social Security/SSI appeals, and family-related legal matters. The final clinic is

December 16, noon-3 p.m. at Family Services of Greater Houston.

Houston Volunteer Lawyers may offer the series in the spring, according to AIDS Project administrator Tom Anthony. Interested individuals can call Anthony, 713/228-0735, ext. 121, to schedule an appointment.

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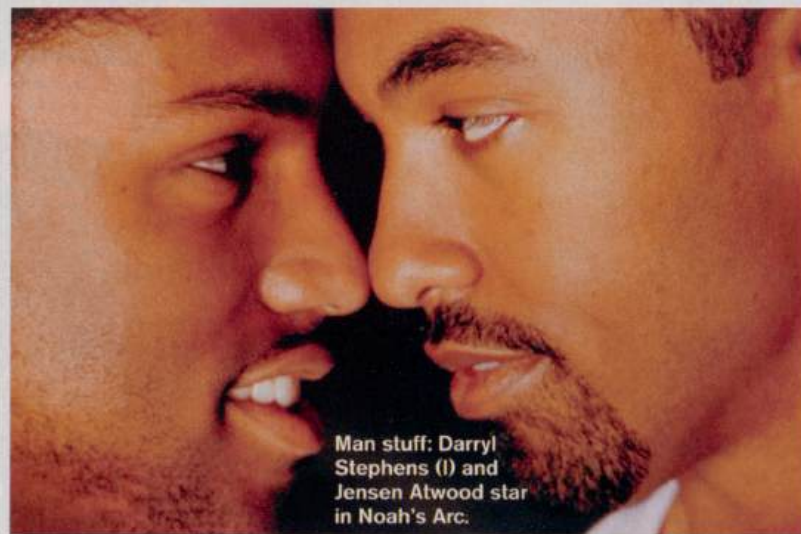
Human Rights Campaign Houston and Fresh Start Church will co-host a screening of the independent television program *Noah's Arc* on December 9, 7:30 p.m., at Meteor. The new series, currently available on DVD, follows the lives of four African-American men living in Los Angeles. Creator Patrik-Ian Polk has referred to his show as a "black *Sex and the City*."

A discussion and reception will follow the screening. Two *Noah's Arc* cast members (not determined at press time) are

scheduled to appear.

The screening is part of Fresh Start's December 9-11 program, Revolution Weekend, which includes worship and a December 10 panel discussion "Building

Bridges Toward Hope and Healing in the SGL [same gender loving] Community," held at First Unitarian Universalist Church. Fresh Start worships every Sunday at the Houston GLBT Community Center.



Man stuff: Darryl Stephens (l) and Jensen Atwood star in *Noah's Arc*.

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CANARY IN A COAL MINE

How the Dems treat GLBT issues may determine the party's future

The gay movement is the canary in the coal mine for the future of the Democratic Party. If party leaders move right and abandon basic fairness and equality, it is a strong signal that they will capitulate and surrender their other core principles, too. This may lead to widespread disillusionment and the creation of a powerful third party that will shake up American politics.

For the record, I have always been a proud Democrat and I still expect to die as one. I have loathed the ego-driven third-party campaigns of megalomaniac Ross Perot and egomaniac Ralph Nader.

The Democratic Party is far from perfect, but it has always been home. It certainly is a no-brainer alternative to a Republican Party that calls bigots "the base." But in the wake of the election defeat, there are some Democrats who want to scapegoat gay people for Bush's victory.

"I think that whole issue [the freedom

to marry] has been too much, too fast, too soon. And people aren't ready for it," said Sen. Dianne Feinstein, D-Calif.

Some Democrats want to veer to the right in the vain hope of pandering to the 22 percent of voters who picked "moral values" as their top issue. They believe the first step in this futile process is to tell gay people they should "know their place" and gladly accept their fate as second-class citizens. That's right, just shut up and take one for the team!

The harbinger is the upcoming vote to pass a Constitutional Amendment prohibiting same-sex marriage. Karl Rove told *Fox News Sunday* that the Republicans would "absolutely" push to enshrine discrimination. If the Democrats buckle and allow gay relationships to be written out of the Constitution, they should not be surprised if many gay people write off the Democratic Party.

This alone, of course, won't cause the formation of a third party with a legitimate

chance of winning. Openly gay people, after all, are only 4 percent of the electorate. But it will signal a move to the right, which will make it easier, for example, to freeze Howard Dean out of a possible chairmanship of the Democratic National Committee.

Dissing Dean won't cause the Democratic dam to break either, but it will cause considerable tension between the progressive and conservative wings of the party. Another fissure might occur if weak-kneed Democrats allow the Supreme Court to be stacked with Antonin Scalia clones.

A fatal rupture may come if the party establishment tries to undercut Hillary Clinton's bid to be president in favor of a Southern conservative. At this point, I believe a third party is a viable possibility with Howard Dean as the nominee. If he has no future in the party, it makes sense that he will look for an alternative platform.

continued on page 22

THE GREAT FED HOPE

Federalism offers a way to cope with the religious revival

Social conservatives hit the trifecta on November 2, winning the White House and gaining seats in both the House and the Senate. Moreover, the election has been interpreted widely as a referendum for "morality" and against gay marriage. What do we do now?

First, don't panic. The evidence for an antigay religious landslide in the 2004 election is actually quite slim. Yes, 22 percent of voters rated "moral values" as the top issue. But 78 percent did not. And Kerry voters comprised almost one-fifth of that 22 percent, so the pro-Bush morality voters were about 17 percent of the total. Some minority of these people probably support gay equality or think of "moral values" as mainly about abortion or a candidate's personal integrity. So probably no more than 15 percent of all voters were driven to the polls primarily by a hellfire-and-brimstone opposition to gays.

Second, panic a little. State constitutional amendments banning gay marriage passed easily in 11 states, with majorities ranging from 57 percent in Oregon to 86 percent in Mississippi.

More such state constitutional amendments will be proposed, and adopted, over the next few election cycles. We'll probably see about 30 states ban gay marriage by constitutional amendment when all is said and done.

Exit polls showed that 27 percent of voters favor gay marriage, while 35 percent favor "civil unions." This led some excited gay pundits to proclaim that a whopping 62 percent of the public favors gay marriage or its equivalent.

Do not believe it. Polls on gay marriage cannot be trusted. They systematically undercount opposition, often by 10 or more percentage points, as they did before the election.

As for civil unions, it's doubtful that most

people understand what the term means, much less understand it in the way gay activists do. Confronted with a polling question containing the actual definition ("Should homosexual couples receive all of the benefits and privileges of marriage, albeit under a different name?"), public support would drop. Informed specifically that gay couples in a civil union would have a right equal to married couples to adopt children, public support would likely fall to levels close to the support for gay marriage.

But there's a deeper reason to be concerned, deeper than particular fights over state amendments. We are in the midst of a religious revival, a periodic fact of life in this country's history. This revival has been most pronounced among Christian evangelicals who cleave to a literal—and antigay—interpretation of the Bible.

The Christian-conservative revival has organized itself politically with increasing →



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LeftOut continued from page 20

The problem with third parties is that they have traditionally lacked money, the ability to disseminate their message and effective grassroots organizers. However, the machinery is already in place for a new progressive third party.

Money will flow from the Internet and from liberal groups such as MoveOn.org, Americans Coming Together, and Howard Dean's network. Air America radio will broadcast the message, along with a host of progressive magazines and blogs. Further, Dean already has name recognition, which will save millions of dollars introducing him to America.

The new party would also be the recipient of the talent, money, political savvy, and grassroots support from millions of politically homeless gay people. The GLBT community would give the new party the crucial jumpstart it needs to effectively launch. I believe within 10 years such a party could be competitive.

To win, the Democrats must hone their message while patiently waiting for the fragile GOP coalition to implode. I firmly believe Neo-Puritan excesses will soon force moderate Republican's out of the party. A Democratic message of social liberalism, fiscal sanity, and tenacity on terrorism would make it possible to lure these former Republicans.

Watch and wait for the gay canary to emerge from the Democratic coal mine. The coughing canary may be sick from newfound conservatism, but it will ultimately endure. I'm not sure I can say the same about a Democratic Party that would abandon the bedrock principle of equal rights for all people.

Wayne Besen writes a column, "Anything But Straight," published at www.outletradio.com. He also contributed a post-election analysis in this issue. Daryl Moore returns in January.

OutRight continued from previous page

vigor and effectiveness. It has now utterly captured the Republican Party, whose hard-right blueprint for victory has been vindicated. For as far as the eye can see, the South and West are solidly Republican and religiously conservative. With the exception of Illinois, the Midwest is also trending Republican. By my count, 34 states are now either deep-red Republican or moving in that direction. In the next few election cycles, by fits and starts, we could see a Senate dominated by a party dominated by antigay religious conservatives.

This leads to my third suggestion. In the face of a long-term and growing religious revival, our best bet is to defend the princi-

ple of federalism. Federalism is the basic design of American government by which limited powers are allocated to the federal government to deal with defense, foreign relations, interstate commerce, certain fundamental rights, and a few other matters, while the states largely control everything else, including criminal law, property rights, and, most importantly for our purposes, family law.

Under our system, states are allowed to act as laboratories to experiment with social and economic reforms. Sometimes state reforms work and are then adopted nationally, as when a few states first gave women the right to vote. Sometimes they don't catch on, as when Nevada partially legalized prostitution.

Even many conservative Republicans who oppose particular reforms (like gay marriage) believe that states should be allowed to experiment with them. Federalism-based arguments are the *only* thing that saved us from a constitutional amendment banning gay marriage this past summer.

With federalism in place, we can use our support in Blue Nation—the relatively secular enclaves in the Northeast, West Coast, and Illinois—to push for positive change (domestic partnerships and civil unions where necessary, marriage where possible). As the results in state races in California, Massachusetts, and Vermont showed, these enclaves are solidifying for pro-gay secularism just as the rest of the country is solidifying for antigay religious conservatism. Experiments in recognizing gay relationships can proceed in this state-by-state way until the religious revival subsides, as historically these revivals always have, or the Republican coalition fissures.

In the meantime, this strategy means discouraging lawsuits that try to nationalize the gay-marriage issue. Further litigation will only succeed in goading Red Nation into antigay constitutional action, which would destroy federalism and any fledgling experiments along with it. We will have to do the hard and time-consuming work of persuading our fellow citizens in the states that they have nothing to fear from encouraging commitment among gay couples.

I still think we win in the long-term, including on marriage. But the election helped to clarify that the long-term is likely to be a very long time indeed. The federalism-based enclave strategy will not please revolutionaries, but it's right in principle, and it's probably the best we can do for now.

Writing from the conservative side, 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.

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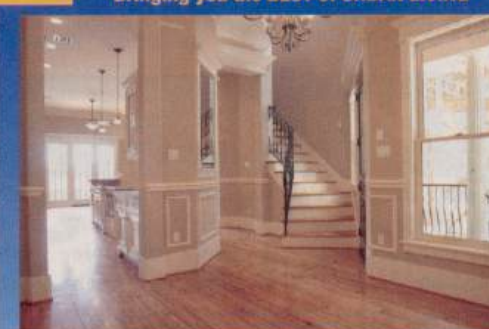
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CHIEF CONCERN

The new police leader arrives with a strong GLBT rep

The Houston Police Department lives in its own world. The K-Mart, DNA lab, and evidence room scandals began to peel back the veil that hides much of that world from the public. Chief Harold Hurtt seems determined to peel the veil back even further, going so far as to suggest that citizens might play a role in hiring and promoting officers.

The new chief recently asked the controller's office to help HPD set up an inspection division to prevent future department scandals. This kind of outreach certainly reflects a refreshing change in attitude.

My office has just finished teaching officers to think like auditors, not cops. Poor management and lax controls can be just as bad for the city as criminal behavior. By helping to ferret out waste, the officers will complement the work being done by the controller's office.

In 1994, controller's office auditors at-

tempted to conduct thorough audits of internal controls and procedures, as well as an inventory in HPD's evidence room, but were denied access to certain records and property. They were blocked again in 1997. Perhaps 280 boxes of evidence from 8,000 cases dating back to 1979 would not have remained undiscovered for a decade had the auditors been able to conduct the audit properly.

It makes me very angry to know that evidence affecting the guilt or innocence of defendants gathered dust for 10 years.

High Mark

Making the right choice for police chief is critical for our community. When the mayor told me Hurtt was his top choice, I immediately called gay elected officials in the Phoenix area. All gave Chief Hurtt top marks.

Neil Giuliano, the openly gay former mayor of Tempe, a Phoenix suburb, praised Hurtt for establishing Phoenix's first hate-

crimes unit, supporting GLBT officers, appointing the first liaison to the GLBT community, and attending Pride events.

In 2001, the chief raised a few police eyebrows by allowing two openly gay officers to appear on the cover of a Phoenix gay magazine "loaded with graphic ads that would make a [Phoenix] *New Times* sales rep blush." (The *New Times* is apparently similar to the *Houston Press*.) The officers were featured leaning against a patrol car, and in the interview they talked about being openly gay on the police force.

According to the *New Times*, the cover and interview request went up the police chain of command and was approved at every level. The story also quoted a sergeant who said the Phoenix department under Hurtt did not screen out gay officers or hold it against them if they were gay.

Organizations all across Houston are getting used to seeing the community-minded

chief at meetings. GLBT organizations need to invite the chief to speak.

A Soft-Spoken Chief

I spent some time with Chief Hurtt a few months ago when I interviewed him on *Money Matters*, my monthly Municipal Channel show. His reputation preceded him: one of the country's top cops from one of the best police forces in one of the best-run cities (Phoenix). Seated next to me was the broad-shouldered, but unexpectedly soft-spoken, 57-year-old chief who is expected to clean up his predecessors' mess and make HPD a first-class department. By all accounts, he is making great progress.

The *Arizona Republic* had praised the departing chief for his "vision, commitment and leadership. As president of Major City Chiefs, Hurtt has brought national and international attention to the Phoenix Police Department as a forward-focused, leading-edge, and best-practice law enforcement agency. He also has built a strong relationship between the community and police through progressive, community-based policing programs."

Shortly after arriving in Houston in March, Hurtt appointed a younger, more diverse command staff, something he waited two years to do in Phoenix. Before picking the staff, he met with all 5,400 HPD officers in large groups, supervisors in small groups, and captains and above individually to ask them to rank their top 10 and bottom five officers.

He reached out to the police union, which was invited to take a place at the table during weekly command meetings.

With the mayor's strong support, Hurtt also recently won City Council approval to buy 3,600 taser guns, more than any other U.S. police department. Still on his announced agenda is getting video cameras at numerous dangerous intersections.

Background

Chief Hurtt started his career in 1968 with the Phoenix department and worked his way up through the ranks. In 1992, he "retired" to take command of the Oxnard, California, department. He returned to Phoenix in 1998 to become the city's first African-American police chief.

Hurtt received a bachelor's in sociology from Arizona State University and a master's in organizational management from the University of Phoenix. He is married with three grown children and seven grandchildren.

Annise Parker is city controller and the highest-ranking openly GLBT elected official in any of the 10 largest U.S. cities. Her city website is www.ci.houston.tx.us/citygovt/controller. Parker's television program, *Money Matters*, airs Monday on the Municipal Channel (TimeWarner Cable 16) at 2 and 8 a.m. and 2 and 8 p.m.

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IF NOT FOR THE PIE

GLBT folks head home for the holidays, some with reluctance

Andy, age 20*

There are a great many things left up to choice. Perhaps it is to our great misfortune that family is not. I am painfully reminded of this every winter season. Life seems to go well, until one brisk day in November the smell of pumpkin pie floats through the air. It is a nostalgic experience at first. One can imagine the wholesome, home-cooked food of... but wait just a minute. Something was askew with that thought—*wholesome, home-cooked*. And then the word just comes crashing down—*home*.

Granted, while each individual is due her or his own unique experience in life, and thus not every GLBT person out there looks like a frightened deer when it comes to the holidays, there are still fair generalizations to be made. Family, for the gay community, is the final frontier. Perhaps it is because there is so much at stake on those grounds. For whatever conceivable reason, the next generations of GLBT youth will more boldly go where other GLBT have gone before: home.

For those who are not out, the holidays can seem like a very bleak world of the haves and the have-nots. Siblings will start bringing their girlfriends or boyfriends to meet the parents, and someone will ask if you've started dating yet. Relatives will visit with their ankle biters and fruitcakes, and you suddenly feel like a very small branch on a more extensive family tree. And to top it all off, there will inevitably be at least one person who has to mention how "The Queers" are out to destroy the sanctity of marriage.

As the years pass, those girlfriends and boyfriends your siblings were bringing home become husbands and wives. The little ankle biters that were your little cousins one day aren't so little anymore, and the thing holding onto your leg is your niece or nephew. The place at the table that was

reserved for your would-be guest is replaced by a highchair and a Sippy-Cup. And there is still that one person who has to talk about what The Queers are doing. For those who aren't out, the very lonely assumption that families are only for straight people might present itself.

However, it is easy to forget just how crass families tend to be. For one thing, that husband or wife your sibling has brought

the straight person we're "supposed to be" seems a lot more subjective than it once was.

For those who are out, we suddenly get to participate in all the wonderful family dynamics that we never cared for in the first place. Suddenly there seems to be more pressure in bringing someone home for the holidays. The question of whether or not we have a girlfriend or boyfriend has turned into a much more frightening one of whether or not the family will find out about that particular girlfriend or boyfriend. Then there seems to be a new attribute to add to our list of acceptable traits in relationships: "Makes respectable table conversation when not coerced."

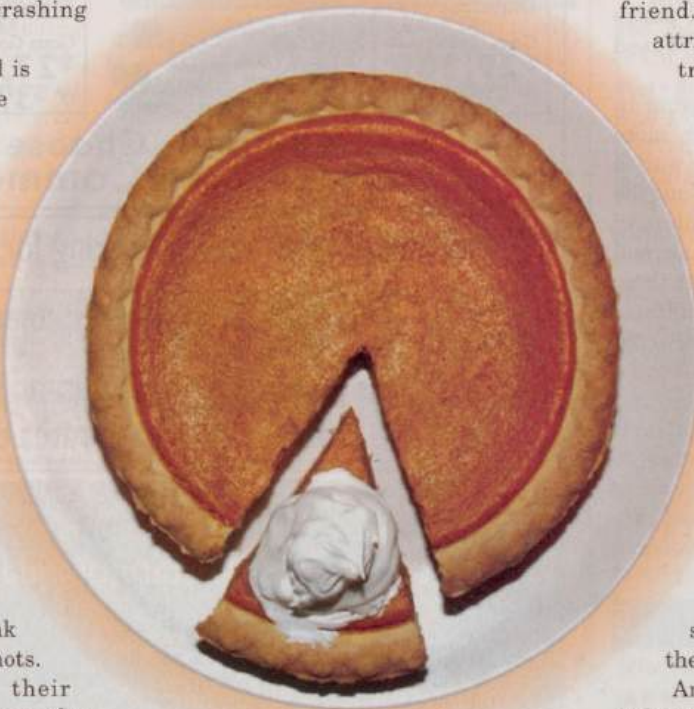
After the initial anxiety of just bringing someone home for the holiday has worn off, the chronic anxiety sets in. For now we realize that not only do we have to successfully bring someone home to Mama, we must begin to bring the same person home consecutively for an extended period of time. It almost seems like there's no question as to why the issue of gay marriage is soon to reach its climax. How else would GLBT people ever get their parents to stop wondering if this relationship is the "one"?

And when all is said and done, we may go home for the holidays to see our siblings and their second wives, cute ankle biters, our disapproving parents, and endure bad fruitcake, obnoxious brats, and chauvinist queer bashers. But it's all really for the smell of pumpkin pie.

Some of the young writers involved with Houston Area Teen Coalition of Homosexuals contribute regularly to OutSmart. Their writing program is part of the H.A.T.C.H. Creative Arts Project, which is funded in part by United Way Kids' Way. The website is www.hatchyouth.org. The phone number is 713/529-3590.

** Because of the age of the writers and the need many have for confidentiality, OutSmart will identify most H.A.T.C.H. contributors by first names only.*

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THE DAY AFTER

Waking up to the new reality, a local activist stresses the need to educate red-state America about our lives

By Anita Renteria

Photo by John Conroy

In the end, the election was about gay people. Here's why we are the reason Bush won reelection: We, as gay and lesbian people, became lulled by the inclusion of our images on television. Hollywood portrayed us in record numbers over the past couple of years, since the demise of Ellen's show and the rise of *Will & Grace*, *Queer as Folk*, and *The L Word*, among

others. There we were on TV, in all our glamorous, funny, fashionable glory.

Lesbian chic became hip. Queer guys and straight guys bonded over fashion, grooming, and canapés. It became cool for straight men to be metrosexuals. We felt adored, celebrated, and, most of all, accepted and acceptable.

That's why it was such a shock to wake up on November 3 and see the ugly truth. No, we are not accepted. Certainly not to the extent we thought we were, not even close.

The Bush campaign and the

Republican Party and its supporters like the Family Research Council sounded a drum beat across the land—across the red, red land—that we were coming, a siege of queers. The venerable institution of marriage was the ancient holy site on the hill, and we, the heathens, were out to enter and defile it by claiming it as ours. The effect was galvanizing—they believed they had to protect themselves. We were everywhere—just look at the television! And we had judges on our side—just look at what's happened

It wasn't us. They don't know us. They don't know our families, our values, our lives. They don't know that our mothers still love us, our families embrace us, our grandmothers greet our lovers with a hug and a smile.

in Massachusetts!

As a result, 11 states had gay marriage bans on the ballot. All 11 passed by wide margins—even, heartbreakingly, in Oregon. That issue is what united them against us, brought them out in force to "protect" themselves, righteous that they were backed by God and George W. Bush.

Pennsylvania, a battleground state that went for Kerry by a decisive margin, is very similar demographically to Ohio, the battleground state that sealed the deal for Bush. The difference? Ohio had a gay marriage ban on the ballot. Pennsylvania did not. Rejection of gay marriage, and therefore gay and lesbian people, is the reason that Bush won reelection.

Here's why we are *not* the reason Bush won reelection:

It wasn't us. They don't know us. They don't know our families, our values, our lives. They don't know that our mothers still love us, our families embrace us, our grandmothers greet our lovers with a hug and a smile. They don't know that we are the favorite aunt or uncle →



Reality check: "We have to take responsibility and not rely on television or activists or any political party to educate those who don't know us," Anita Renteria writes.

TAKE ACTION

Still feeling blue, stuck in your red state? Don't just sit and mourn. Support one of the organizations that work to protect and advance our rights. Here are a few (with their basic membership fees):

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www.gpac.org

Houston Gay & Lesbian Political Caucus
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713/521-1000
www.hgplc.org

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212/604-9830
www.nglft.org

National Transgender Advocacy Coalition
\$25
info@ntac.org
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The Day After

continued from page 28

to our nieces and nephews. That our kids love us and have happy, decent homes, that we help with their homework and worry when they aren't doing well in school or have a cold or that they might get picked on like many of us did.

They don't see that we go to church, pay taxes, own homes, work hard. We complain about gas prices, sit in traffic, rent movies, walk our dogs. They don't know that we have backyard barbecues in the summer with our friends, straight and gay, and that we give generously to charities and volunteer in our communities. We cried and hurt on September 11, 2001, with every other American and our friends around the world. At least one of us died that day on United 93, involved in heroically preventing the hijackers from achieving their horrible goal.

They don't see that. They don't see us as

We have much work to do. No more living in an insular community where we mingle only with those who already love and accept us.

Americans. They don't see us as themselves.

Forty-eight hours later, on this cold, clear, painful day, I am still in despair. My heart is broken, I am devastated, and I am completely demoralized. My pain, and the overwhelming feeling of hopelessness are still far, far too strong. I will wear black all week in mourning, because truly I am in mourning.

But I am beginning to realize that I am in mourning for the country I thought we lived in. I am in mourning for that wonderful, warm bubble of acceptance I lived in before November 2. I knew there was opposition, of course. But I truly believed there were more people who could see through Bush—who could understand, the way I understood, that we were being used as a wedge—than there were those who didn't. Now I, we as GLBT Americans, and the whole country and world know differently. They really do want to change the Constitution to ban us from participating fully in the rights given other American citizens. No, they do not accept us.

So what do we do now?

We must educate them by being who we

are and sharing our lives—our *real* lives—with them. We have much work to do. No more living in an insular community where we mingle only with those who already love and accept us. No more choosing to be out only to those whom we already know accept us. No more refusing to leave our safe, friendly little world, shopping only in safe stores, eating only in friendly restaurants.

No more hiding who we are when we are out of our comfort zone. We are the only ones who can educate them. We are the only ones who know we are just like them in many ways, and that the ways in which we aren't are often wonderful. I am not advocating stridency. I am saying that we must resolve to let those who don't know us get to know us. The real us—not the us on television or the us that our detractors define us to be.

Mention your vacation at work. Talk about your family. Share common experiences. Expand your circle one person at a time. Volunteer in a city or community organization or event that includes straight people and be who you are confidently and openly. Write to your elected officials. I'm not kidding. Get to know your neighbors, even if they aren't gay or particularly friendly.

I can't believe that anyone who knows us as we are, who sees the contributions we make, who recognizes the common experiences we share as Americans will resist

supporting our full and equal inclusion in having the rights we are due as Americans. It's been shown that people who know a GLBT person are more inclined to support our rights than those who don't (or don't know they do).

But we ourselves are the ones who have to make it happen. It's the only way. We have to take responsibility and not rely on television or activists or any political party to educate those who don't know us. We won't ever win over all of them. That can't be our goal. But we need more of them, not all of them. And the good news is, maybe not that many more. With over 113 million votes cast, Bush only won by the votes of three and a half million people. There are millions more than that of us. We have four years. We can get there, one person at a time.

There is hope, even today, after November 2. But it will take work and making a real effort. It's up to us. The real us.

Anita Renteria wrote about her experience as a Democratic National Convention delegate in our September issue. She is the past president of Greater Houston GLBT Chamber of Commerce.

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A NEW WORLD

Post election, a seasoned observer surveys the changed political territory and plots action

By Wayne Besen
Photo by Michael Murphy

Not even the fabulous RuPaul could find a shade of lipstick glamorous enough to pretty up this election pig. The excruciating defeat was an unmitigated disaster for the GLBT community. With the Supreme Court thrown into the equation, there is the very real possibility that some aspects of the movement could be set back decades. Many of my good friends and colleagues are depressed, even despondent, as they well should be. A couple of buddies are even thinking of moving to Canada.

My advice? Before you buy your parka, get plastered. That's right, go out and get drunk. Then, get up in the morning and get over it. To quote our re-elected President George W. Bush, we've got a lot of "hard work" to do.

Here is a snapshot of the precarious new world we now face:

GEORGE W. BUSH. The president is not obsessed with gay issues, nor does he appear particularly uncomfortable with gay individuals who tow the GOP party line. To underscore his semi-comfort, Bush said right before the election that he would not care if states offered GLBT people civil unions. According to Bush: "I don't think we should deny people rights to a civil union, a legal arrangement, if that's what a state chooses to do. I view the definition of marriage different from legal arrangements that enable people to have rights. And I strongly believe that marriage ought to be defined as between a union between a man and a woman. Now, having said that, states ought to be able to have the right to pass laws that enable people to be able to have rights like others."

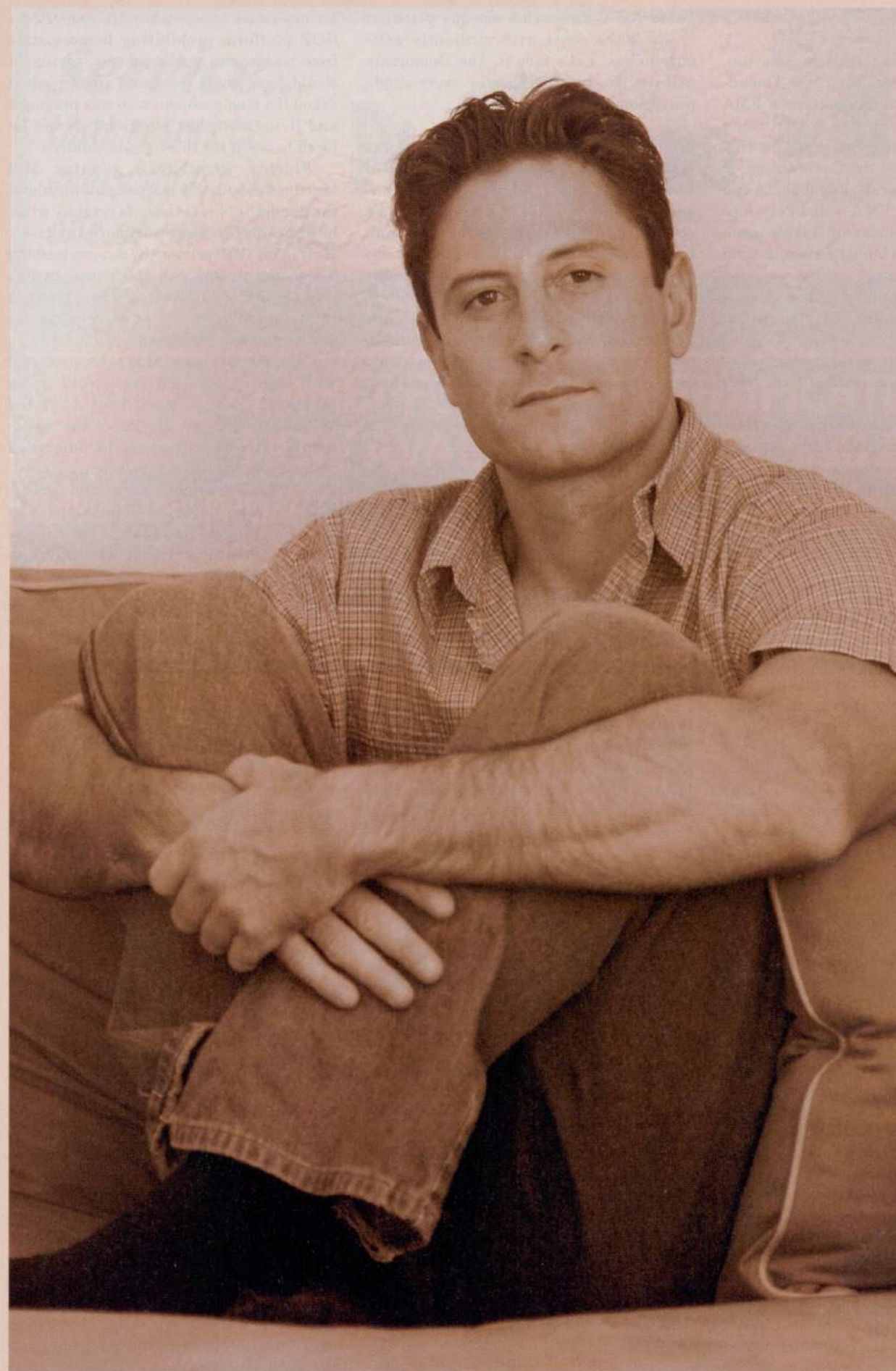
Over the next four years we must fight like hell to roll back this dark tide that threatens to cast a shadow on the Enlightenment.

Nonetheless, Bush has never hesitated—and has often enthusiastically embraced—using our lives as fodder when it became politically expedient to do so. A few examples: Bush favored keeping Texas's sodomy law on the books. He is against hate crime legislation. This year, he pushed for a divisive constitutional amendment prohibiting same-sex marriage.

Now that Bush no longer needs the extreme right for reelection, will he move more to the center? Will his alliance with the Neo-Puritan crowd be symbolic or substantive? Unfortunately, the greatest indicator of future behavior is past behavior, which means I am skeptical that Bush will move to the center.

With a decisive electoral victory and all branches of government at his disposal, it will be tempting for King George to reward his zealous, faith-based followers. I suspect that one of the first prizes will be a ferocious push to pass the Federal Marriage Amendment.

FMA. With 11 states overwhelmingly passing constitutional amendments on Election Day, including eight of →



The long view: "This is the beginning of a long, bitter struggle for the soul of America," Wayne Besen writes.

these states banning civil unions too, passage of the Federal Marriage Amendment has momentum. Supporters of FMA have one legitimate shot to capitalize on their referendum successes and pass this hateful desecration of the Constitution. If Democrats and moderate Republicans can hold firm now, the FMA will likely lose steam for the remainder of Bush's term, barring a Republican landslide in mid-term congressional elections.

Although I don't think it will pass, brace for the distinct possibility that it may.

SUPREME COURT. This could be known as the Almond Joy Court—lots of nuts from the Bar.

The Supremes are so old that they refer to the Golden Girls as "kids." It is possible that Bush will appoint up to four Supreme Court justices, and he has said that his favorite justices are the horribly homophobic Clarence Thomas and Antonin Scalia.

The Democrats are going to have to be strong and stop combustible, judgmental judges from winning confirmation. If they fail to do so, our community will lose reasonable access to the Supreme Court for at least a decade.

Republican moderates will also have to do their part to rein in attempts to nominate lunatics to the Supreme Court. Arlen Specter, who is expected to head the Senate judiciary committee, has already cautioned Bush against nominating zealous anti-abortion judges.

Speaking of which, Roe vs. Wade is in imminent danger. If a new Supreme Court overturns the right to choose, at least 30 states are poised to quickly outlaw abortion.

This will, of course, ultimately backfire. Those who can afford abortions will flee to other states. There will also be a thriving black market for the pregnancy termination drug RU-486. Ultimately, the only people who will not be able to safely end pregnancy are poor women. The result will be horrific back-alley abortions, with the bleeding victims live on CNN. There will also be intrusive Inquisition-like trials of young women. Ending Roe v. Wade will not stop abortion. It will, however, create a lot of victims and ultimately be a public relations nightmare for the conservative movement.

Finally, the ramifications of Bush's victory affect more than just the Supreme Court. Bush will likely try to ramrod through federal judges recommended by ideologues at the right-wing legal group The

Federalist Society. This has the potential to stack the court with virulently anti-gay judges. Let's face it, the Democrats will not be able to filibuster every single nutty nominee.

WORST CASE SCENARIO. A Supreme Court packed with ideologues decides to overturn Lawrence v. Texas, which legalized consensual sodomy. Currently, Virginia's sodomy law, although unconstitutional, remains on the books. If three Scalia clones are named to the court, I could foresee the court using the Virginia law as a pretext to retry Lawrence, effectively criminalizing homosexuality in many of the red states. Legal experts tell me this is highly unlikely, and I tend to trust their wisdom. My gut, however, tells me that the overturning Lawrence remains a distant, but conceivable threat.

If there is one goal we must accomplish in the next four years, it is to make the word *conservative* as politically radioactive as *liberal* is today.

SENATE. The Republicans picked up six seats in the Senate to gain a 55-44 majority, with one independent. These folks aren't your father's garden-variety moderate Republicans. In fact, these Neo-Puritans make Trent Lott look like Ted Kennedy. They are flat-out scary. I exaggerate not when I say they are mean, bizarre, hatermongering bigots who will defile the institution the same way Newt Gingrich debased the House.

Oklahoma's new Republican senator, Tom Coburn, is the worst. He is a strong proponent of "abstinence only" sex education and had a surreal campaign moment when he said that Oklahoma's schools bred "rampant lesbianism." As a congressman, Coburn once complained that NBC should not show *Schindler's List* during family hours. He was quoted in a news release as saying the film took network television "to an all-time low, with full-frontal nudity, violence, and profanity being shown in our homes." Any person who sees *Schindler's List* as pornographic is one sick, psycho-sexually stunted bastard who desperately needs to seek professional help. Oklahomans who voted for this prig should be ashamed of themselves.

Jim DeMint, South Carolina's new senator, is not far behind Coburn in the

Looney Tunes sweepstakes. He supported a GOP platform prohibiting homosexuals from teaching in public schools, saying, "I would have given the same answer when asked if a single woman who was pregnant and living with her boyfriend should be hired to teach my third-grade children."

Florida Republican senator Mel Martinez apparently learned nothing about the dangers of Fidel Castro's tyranny when he fled Cuba to become an American citizen. He won his GOP primary by out-gay bashing his opponent, Rep. Bill McCollum. In this primary, *The St. Petersburg Times* took the unprecedented step of reversing its endorsement of Martinez.

"The *Times* is not willing to be associated with bigotry," the editors wrote, citing Martinez' direct mail that branded McCollum "the new darling of the homosexual extremists" because he supported hate crimes legislation.

Senator-elect John Thune, who defeated Tom Daschle in South Dakota, is a fundamentalist zealot who refers to himself as a "servant leader."

HOUSE. In the House, legislation to advance GLBT equality is DOA... Dead On Arrival. Period.

The Republicans are headed for a gain of at least four seats in the House of Representatives, bringing their total to a minimum of 231-201, with one independent. Much of this gain was due to corrupt Majority Leader Tom DeLay's sleazy redistricting scheme in Texas. With wider margins in the House, it is doubtful that anyone will restrain DeLay's immoral and possibly illegal subversion of the Democratic system.

WILD CARD. The GOP may look unified today. But that ends soon when George W. Bush will likely pursue his radical foreign and domestic agenda. The most potent opposition, however, may not come from Democrats, but moderate Republicans.

I suspect that fiscal conservatives may revolt when Bush tries to pass permanent tax cuts, which are really permanent deficits. I would also wager that Bush would have to begin telling the truth on foreign policy or face a rebellion by senators John McCain and Richard Lugar. Saying "freedom is on the march" when things are imploding will no longer cut it.

If Bush overplays his hand, this may lead to a further realignment of the electorate. My guess is Republicans who are moderate on social issues or deficit hawks may leave the party in droves if the party grossly overreaches. If the Taliban wing →

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A New World continued from page 34

of the GOP runs wild, Democrats should spend the next four years wooing moderate Republicans into the fold. After all, the Democrats have become the party of fiscal sanity and personal responsibility.

Finally, if the war in Iraq becomes another Vietnam, all bets are off on what happens to voting patterns in 2008. If you think America is divided now, just wait and see how things are if we are still bogged down in Iraq with little progress to show for our sacrifices in three years. Bush has about a six-month grace period to show he can get a lid on this volcano. If not, the lava will consume his presidency.

DISASTER. If conventional wisdom ends up blaming anti-marriage constitutional amendments for losing Kerry the election, there could be some ugly skirmishes over support for gay rights in the Democratic Party.

California senator Dianne Feinstein has told the *Los Angeles Times*, "I think it [same-sex marriage] gave them a position to rally around. The whole issue was too much, too fast, too soon."

If the more conservative faction wins out, this would essentially put GLBT Americans in the political wilderness. It would also, of course, hurt a Democratic Party that depends on our money, votes, and incredible energy.

Already, there is chatter about choosing a presidential nominee in 2008 who is more palatable to the red states. Don't be fooled: This simply means less gay friendly. Progressive Democrats must fight to make sure the party stays committed to advancing GLBT equality.

HOPE. Yes, even at a funeral, solace can be found. In Massachusetts, the pro-marriage faction of the legislature was strengthened in the elections. This increases the likelihood that the state's constitution won't be amended to prohibit the freedom to marry.

Cincinnati overturned a repugnant 10-year-old law that prevented the city from passing legislation to protect gays and lesbians from discrimination.

This is real progress, and we should be proud of the activists in Massachusetts and Cincinnati that provided a ray of sunshine on the dimmest of days.

HOPELESS. Even though the Log Cabin Republicans refused to support Bush, 23 percent of gay voters cast their ballots for the president. This shows how deep the roots of self-loathing and internalized →

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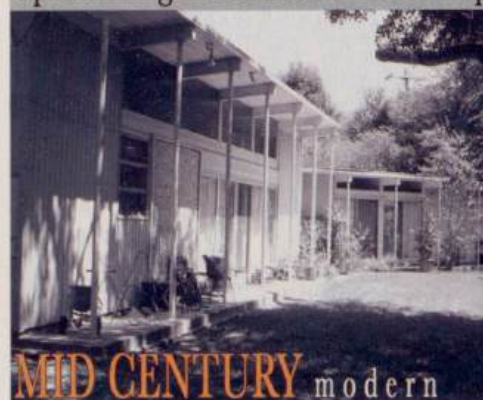
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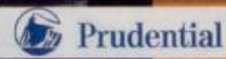
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A New World continued from page 36

homophobia can run. The president wants to write gay families out of the Constitution. Just like Lynne and Dick Cheney, gay Bush supporters won't even stand up for their own families. It's hard to respect or trust people who will sell their own partners and children down the river. I certainly don't want to hear any of these folks whine if their votes come back to bite them in the ass.

HARD WORK. We have a huge problem on our hands. A wave of religious fanaticism has swept much of America and threatens to eviscerate the Constitution and turn our nation into the Christian version of Iran.

Over the next four years we must fight like hell to roll back this dark tide that threatens to cast a shadow on the Enlightenment. If there is one goal we must accomplish in the next four years, it is to make the word *conservative* as politically radioactive as *liberal* is today. To win, we must change the culture to respect freedom and diversity.

This can be done by proudly standing up for our core values. We must contrast our hopeful vision of America with the bleak ideology presented by the Neo-Puritans who threaten to destroy pluralism in America. We can succeed by uniting secular Americans with moderate religious leaders.

Nations that embrace fundamentalism do not prosper. Religious extremism inevitably brings wars, debt, international bellicosity, and internal division. If you look at the Bush administration's record, these are the "gifts" he has brought the world.

Liberals and moderates have to win the war of ideas. To accomplish this, we must continue to build organizations that can effectively counter the right wing's vast media and think-tank empire.

Media such as Air America must be expanded. A farm team of moderate talk-show hosts must be developed who can effectively communicate in the red states. We need more groups like Media Matters to monitor the distortions of the right-wing and mainstream media. Grassroots organizations like Americans Coming Together, MoveOn.org, and Howard Dean's base must be expanded.

Finally, gay organizations have to focus on telling our stories to the nation. Cut the political spin and slick inside-the-Beltway language. It is imperative to speak from the heart and introduce our families to middle America over and over again.

We must launch a project that tours the nation, particularly college campuses, and effectively articulates why we want the freedom to marry. If we move the numbers a mere 10 percent in our favor between now and the 2008 elections, we will have done an enormous amount to help defuse this issue.

The good news: Polls show that a plurality of Americans believes GLBT families deserve varying degrees of legal recognition. Marriage is a greater challenge. But this is ultimately about family values, so it's an issue we can win.

THANKS. We need to thank John Kerry and John Edwards for running a spirited campaign that sought to unite America. Sure, there were stumbles, but overall they fought hard for the election. They simply could not overcome the ugly, despicable campaign of fear and smear that sent Bush back to the White House.

Look, 75 percent of Bush's supporters believe Iraq either worked closely with Al Qaeda or was directly involved in the attacks of 9/11. It is clear the Bush campaign fostered ignorance and then exploited the ignorant.

So, ironically, the war hero was defeated by the war zero on security issues. The class act lost to a class clown. Look on the bright side. At least we get to laugh at Bozo and his buffoonish gaffes for four more years.

Finally, there are great lessons to be learned in defeat. Up from the ashes we will rise to build a powerful coalition to defeat forces that want to turn America into a Neo-Puritan state.

Of all people, Rev. Pat Robertson can teach us an important lesson.

After he lost the 1988 Republican primary to George Bush, Robertson turned his mailing list into the Christian Coalition. His goal was to create a Christian nation. In less than 20 years, Robertson has accomplished much of his agenda. Today, we elect lunatics who complain that *Schindler's List* is pornographic.

Defeat leads to introspection and, ultimately, action. This is the beginning of a long, bitter struggle for the soul of America. If we stick together with steely resolve, America will remain a free, pluralistic nation that celebrates and respects all its citizens.

Wayne Besen, author of *Anything But Straight: Unmasking the Scandals and Lies Behind the Ex-Gay Myth* (Harrington Park Press), wrote about John Kerry for our September issue. The Florida-based writer is the former spokesperson for the Human Rights Campaign.



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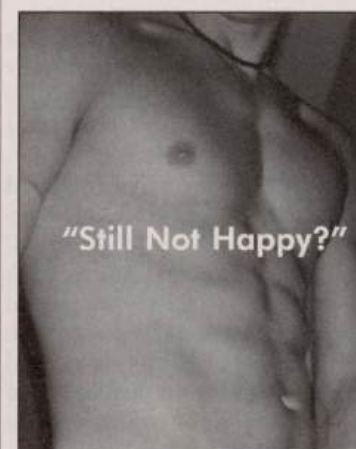
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Share the Wealth

Community groups need holiday gifts, too.

This year, we feature PWA Holiday Charities

by Joe Milano • Photo by Todd Rainer

It all started in the early 1990s with a drag queen's holiday spirit and a wad of \$5 bills. These days, PWA Holiday Charities keeps that spirit alive to the tune of over \$50,000 per year to spread cheer to people living with HIV/AIDS.

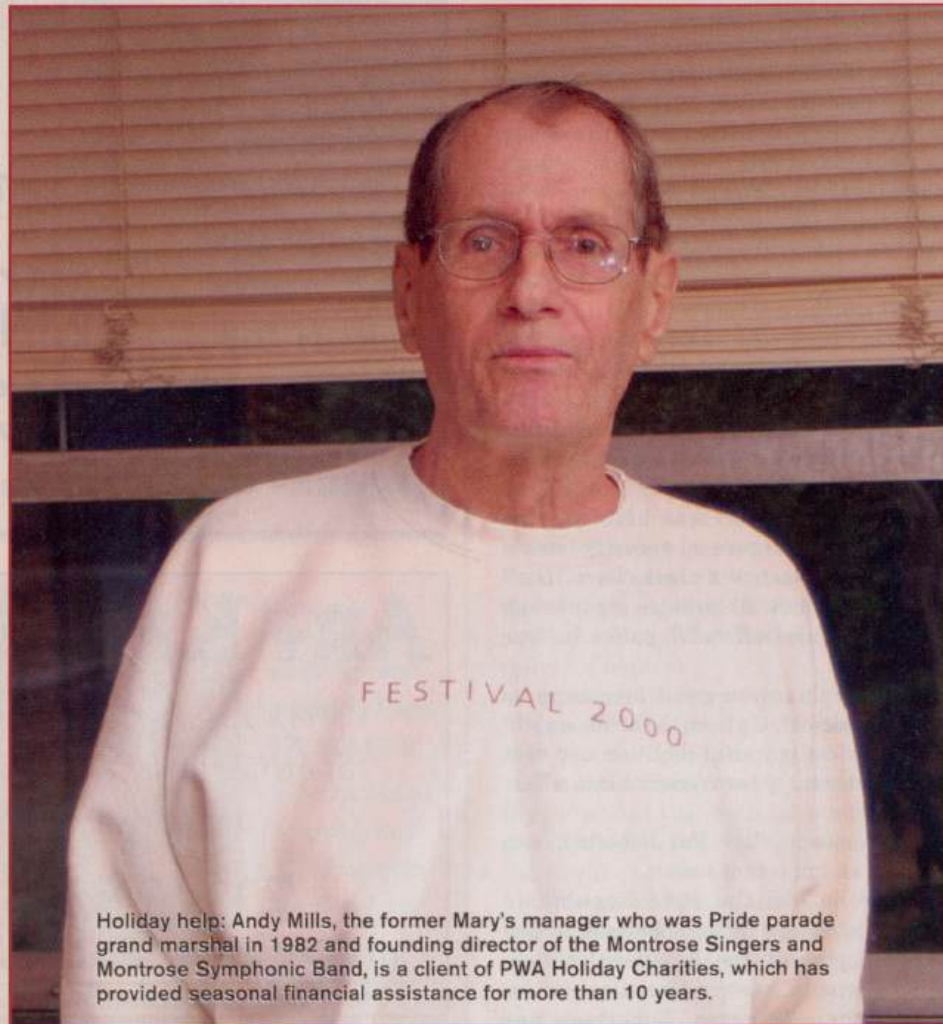
By day, Lady Victoria Lust worked for the city health department as Marvin Davis, and created many of the guidelines regarding residents with HIV that are still in effect today. At night, she performed in her comic persona. She ran for the title of empress of the Royal, Sovereign and Imperial Court of the Single Star, and used her fame to help people living with HIV on the Colt 45's AIDS TroubleFund list. She staged a benefit at the Brazos River Bottom and raised enough to send a \$5 bill to each client.

"She felt that while many of us were celebrating the holidays with family and friends, people in hospitals or hospices weren't able to celebrate," says Don Gill, now PWA Holiday Charities chairman. "She wanted to let these people know she cared."

Lady Victoria Lust met Gill at Mary's in 1994 while Gill was running for his own title, Mr. Prime Choice (which he eventually won). The two quickly discovered they shared common platforms: strong desires to help others less fortunate than themselves. She installed Gill as co-chair of the charity, opening the door for him to take over when she died in 1996.

Under Gill's watch, the \$5 bills grew into checks that average \$100 each. That's quite a stocking stuffer for people who desperately need money just to meet basic necessities of life, according to Colt 45's AIDS TroubleFund chairman Daddy Rose (Rose Smith). "The circumstances our clients face on a day-to-day basis mean that the holidays are not going to be on the top of their list of favorites. Yet the help that PWA Holiday Charities gives them makes their holidays brighter and brings true happiness into their lives."

In addition, the charity provides \$15 grocery store gift certificates for AIDS Foundation Houston Stone Soup Food Pantry clients during Easter and Thanks-



Holiday help: Andy Mills, the former Mary's manager who was Pride parade grand marshal in 1982 and founding director of the Montrose Singers and Montrose Symphonic Band, is a client of PWA Holiday Charities, which has provided seasonal financial assistance for more than 10 years.

giving weeks so they can buy special treats or ingredients for their holiday meal. The organization also donates Christmastime meals to clients of the Bering Care Center and Bering Support Network.

Other past projects have included giving prepaid phone cards to Milam House and Omega House residents to use to call loved ones, providing assistance with cremation or burial expenses in special cases, and hosting campouts for people with HIV/AIDS at Buzzards' Peak, a central Texas spread owned by the Dallas-based Texas Conference of Clubs (which donates its use for the biannual events).

One of PWA Holiday Charities' newest endeavors, the Wishful Thinking Fund, was established in 2002 to fulfill wishes of for HIV-positive applicants who are disabled. Requests for things like fixing a broken TV, cleaning or painting a house, or providing a holiday trip to visit family will be reviewed by a committee chaired by Bob Bouton. Selected wishes will be matched with businesses, individuals, or organizations that can make them come true.

Generating all the cash needed to distribute these holiday tidings takes a lot of time, talent, and energy. That's where Gill comes in. He and his volunteers coordinate

special events year-round. Many local bars and clubs collect cash by selling greetings known as "thoughts," and by displaying yellow collection boxes with the PWA Holiday Charities logo. Volunteers also stage regular shows and productions that include these annual events:

PWA Holiday Charities Christmas Show

This annual extravaganza on December 12, 7 p.m., at Brazos River Bottom will feature performances by members of the Krewe of Olympus, Resurrection Metropolitan Community Church choir, female impersonators, local vocalists, and other entertainers. There's no cover charge, but free-will offerings of cash and charges to credit cards are welcomed throughout the evening. This year's goal is \$10,000 to help defray the cost of the 700 grocery-store gift cards distributed at Thanksgiving.

Miss Keys West 2005 Pageant

In addition to donating the evening's proceeds, the winner of this January 16 pageant at Keys West agrees to perform a minimum of three other benefit shows for the charity during her reign. Aurora Briar is the 2004 titleholder.

Christmas in July Show

This annual bash is also held at Brazos River Bottom and is co-directed and produced by Miss Alabama and David Sawyer.

Royal couple: Shortly before her death in 1996, PWA Holiday Charities founder Lady Victoria Lust (l) attended a costume event with Don Gill, who now chairs the organization.



DALTON DEHART

Boy of Montrose Contest

This annual contest in July raises money to cover administrative costs of running PWA Holiday Charities. The winner of this contest also agrees to stage three other benefits. Boy Robert is 2004 Boy of Montrose.

Proceeds from the Boy of Montrose contest cover all administrative costs for PWA Holiday Charities, according to Gill, which allows 100 percent of proceeds from other fundraising activities to directly benefit to the people with HIV/AIDS that need it most. This generosity inspires letters of thanks and stories from people whose lives were touched in a special way. Gill recalls one fellow shopper who once approached him in a supermarket.

"You don't know me," the shopper said, "but I sure know you. I want to thank you for the check I got last Christmas. My mother wanted to visit, but we were \$25 short of funds for her bus ticket. The check enabled us to buy not only the ticket, but more holiday food for our freezer than you could imagine." The shopper began to cry tears of happiness, and so did Gill.

Stories like these make all the time and energy it takes to run the charity rewarding for Gill (who *OutSmart* readers named male community hero, top male fundraiser, and most valuable volunteer—as well as favorite male hairdresser—in the 2004 Gayest & Greatest poll).

"I was honored that Lady Victoria Lust chose me to be her successor," he says. "When she died, I really wasn't ready to take over. But with advice from people like Richard Watson, Bill Havard, Jeanette Vaughn, Julie Siska, and others, I became instilled with confidence. PWA Holiday Charities is what it is today thanks to them, members of our community, and the support and trust they have in me."

Joe Milano is a local writer and dad. This is his first feature for *OutSmart*.

HOW TO HELP

Send a check, attend an event, or become a member by committing 12 hours of your time per year and sending \$25 to the organization: **PWA Holiday Charities**, P.O. Box 66849, Houston, TX 77266-6849.

Or use your time, talents, or financial gifts to help grant a wish: **The Wishful Thinking Fund**, P.O. Box 66092, Houston, TX 77266-6092.

ONE AND ONLY

In this year's Share the Wealth feature, we opted to concentrate on a single group and provide more information on that group's efforts. In previous Share the Wealth features, we recommended 5–10 organizations:

SHARE THE WEALTH 2003

- **The Assistance Fund**
713/529-4788
www.theassistancefund.org
- **PAWS Houston (Pets Are Wonderful Support)**
281/443-3360
www.pawshouston.org
- **AVES (Amigo Volunteers in Education and Service)**
713/626-2837
www.aves-health.org
- **Lesbian/Gay Rights Lobby of Texas**
512/474-5475
www.lglr.org
- **The Positive Art Workshop**, art classes for people with HIV/AIDS offered at the Houston GLBT Community Center, was suspended earlier this year when the instructor bowed out. The center's board of directors has announced plans to resume classes in 2005.

SHARE THE WEALTH 2002

- **H.A.T.C.H. (Houston Area Teen Coalition of Homosexuals)**
713/529-3590
www.hatchyouth.org
- **People With AIDS Coalition-Houston**
713/522-5428
www.pwach.org
- **Donald R. Watkins Memorial Foundation**
713/528-1748
www.josephgathe.com/drwmf
- **Lesbian Health Initiative Houston**
713/603-0023
www.lhihouston.org
- **Houston Gay & Lesbian Film Festival**
713/524-3818
www.hlgff.org

SHARE THE WEALTH 2001

- **AssistHers**
713/521-4628
www.assisthers.org
- **Gulf Coast Archive & Museum of GLBT History**
713/227-5973
www.gcam.org
- **Friends of Tsungirai**
www.usafriends.org
- **Q-Patrol**
713/528-SAFE
- **James Byrd Jr. Foundation for Racial Healing**
888/656-6414
<http://byrdfoundation.org>
- **Houston GLBT Community Center**
713/524-3818, www.houstonglbtcommunitycenter.org
- **PFLAG/H.A.T.C.H. Youth Scholarship Foundation**
713/942-7002
www.pflaghouston.org
- **Pride Committee of Houston**
713/529-6979
www.pridehouston.org
- **AIDS Housing Coalition of Houston**, another Share the Wealth 2001 choice, reorganized in 2003 as the **West Heights Shelter** (502 W. 24th St., 713/864-1795).
- **The 52nd St. House**, a Galveston shelter for homeless trans individuals established by **Community Awareness for Transgender Support**, closed in 2002. CATS has since revived under the leadership of new executive director Paige Mahogany, one of the individuals on our People to Watch list this year [January 2004].

The DIFFA Difference

After 20 years and \$31 million, the national organization—and its Houston chapter—continues to raise money for the HIV/AIDS fight



Holiday sparkle: Bruce Banes of Bonaparte Antiques created this fanciful wreath, inspired by a Fabergé egg, which will be auctioned at the December 11 Glitter Ball.

by Joe Milano
Photos by John Conroy

Fundraising entities come and go. Especially for clubs and groups formed around social activities, the ability to raise funds can diminish when individuals no longer feel the need for networking. Not so with the Design Industries Foundation Fighting AIDS (DIFFA.) Created as an industry-wide response to HIV/AIDS, these pioneers mobilized the immense nationwide resources of the design community and have raised over \$31 million during the course of DIFFA's 20-year history.

The group organized in April 1984 when a dozen or so people gathered in the New York office of textile designer Pat Green. They were responding to a letter she sent expressing a sense of desperation about losing friends and colleagues to the disease at an alarming rate and her determination to do something about it. Volunteers from fashion, interior design, furnishings, and architecture came together from coast-to-

coast and began to form a national network of DIFFA chapters.

Enter Houston. Three years later, co-founders Michael Dale, Betsie Weatherford, and Lynn Billings Etheridge launched a local chapter out of their own desire to join forces to help friends. With their own penchant for creating and hosting special events with panache, DIFFA/Houston became a major player in the local fundraising arena and a respected source of funding for area HIV/AIDS service providers.

"One of the things I love about DIFFA is that the events are so much fun," says DIFFA/Houston director Rodney Honerkamp, who oversees chapter activities and orchestrates special events. "People give so much, and the talents they express are amazing."

Honerkamp has used his own talents to help make Houston a shining star in the DIFFA universe. He grew up a farm boy in Brenham and graduated from the University of Texas with a degree in marketing. After a brief stint in engineering, Honerkamp followed his heart and worked in the nonprofit world for 10 years, bringing professionals and international visitors here for the Institute of International Education. He spent a few years as house manager and event planner for a prominent Houston family and dabbled for a while in the retail jewelry trade.

After being recruited by a friend to serve on the local DIFFA board, Honerkamp saw the Houston chapter struggle without an office or director. At that point, four years ago, he stepped up to the plate and offered to put the skills he had developed to work full time on a cause that was important to him. "I have friends who are battling this disease and I do this to show my care and concern for them," he says. "We all make choices about what we do with our time and our talents, and this is what I was called to do. It's challenging and it has made me grow in a lot of ways."

Honerkamp has seen to it that the Houston chapter grew in a lot of ways, too. He keeps administrative costs down and gets many resources donated, earning the distinction of having the best expense-to-revenue ratio of all DIFFA chapters. That has allowed the Houston chapter to grant over \$2.8 million to local HIV/AIDS service providers since its inception. One of the most notable early successes was The Assistance Fund, which was built from the ground up with DIFFA funds and now provides much-needed support by paying for health insurance premiums and medications for individuals living with AIDS.

Raising money to support other service providers is DIFFA's primary focus. Funds are disseminated locally every spring. The local Ryan White Planning Council broadcasts an announcement of the beginning of the grant process. Interested organizations contact Honerkamp, who then solicits financial and basic organizational information along with descriptions of how requested funds will be used. A committee of local community leaders reviews the responses and decides which organizations will get grant money based on a determination of which programs and services can make the most impact in our community.

Grants totaling \$75,000 were awarded in 2004, ranging from \$2,000 to \$10,000 per organization. DIFFA funding helped low-income pet owners keep and maintain their beloved companions through PAWS Houston (Pets Are Wonderful Support) and provided two new defibrillators to Bering Omega Community Services for use in its adult day-care center and dental clinic through the American Red Cross. Other recipients included AIDS Foundation Houston, The Assistance Fund, Baylor College of Medicine, Bering Support Network, Casa de Esperanza, Montrose Counseling Center, and The Center for AIDS.

DIFFA/Houston has several fundraising projects on its plate including two major annual events. Dining by Design is a spring feast at which patrons dine while immersed in magnificent environments created by local designers. The Wreath Collection is an annual silent auction of one-of-a-kind wreaths created by artists, architects, merchants, and

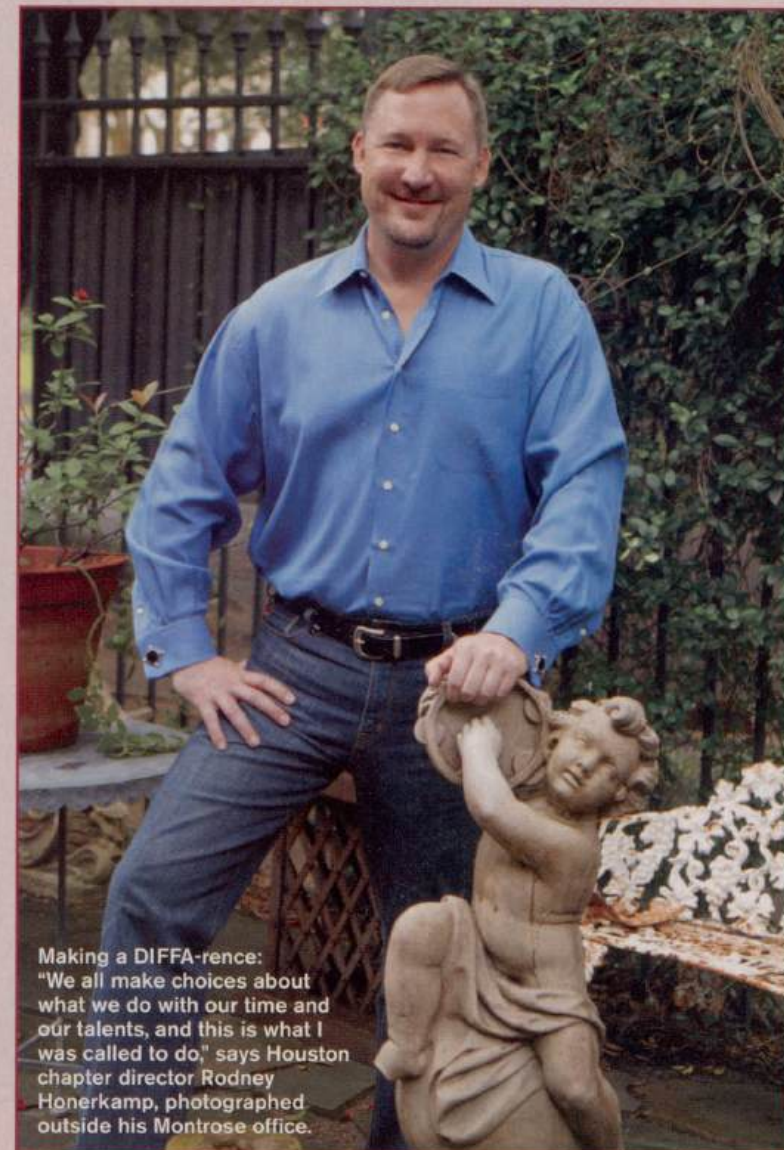
floral and interior designers. This year's auction will be incorporated into an all-new evening of festivities entitled Glitter Ball on December 11 at Deborah Colton Gallery.

While these events with successful track records help insure that the future will be a rosy one for DIFFA/Houston (www.diffa.org), both the national organization and local chapter have seen their share of lean times. The national office endured staff cutbacks and had to relocate into less costly office space, and local efforts hit a slowdown some years ago due to volunteer burnout.

According to Honerkamp, many other HIV/AIDS organizations, especially those with large staffs and expenses, suffered similar lulls in fundraising. He blames it on apathy caused by the misguided notion that HIV/AIDS is disappearing as a threat. He points out that contributions were generous in the early days of the epidemic, but have waned because of media attention given to better manageability of the disease through modern drug regimens. "Sadly, though, infection rates remain on the rise," Honerkamp warns. "Adults and adolescents think that HIV/AIDS is taken care of by these new drugs. It's not. There's still no cure."

So until the cure arrives, Honerkamp will keep plugging away to help people with HIV/AIDS. "That's why I do what I do," he says. "As long as there are people with this disease willing to fight, I'm willing to be in their corner."

Joe Milano also reports on PWA Holiday Charities in this issue.



Making a DIFFA-rence: "We all make choices about what we do with our time and our talents, and this is what I was called to do," says Houston chapter director Rodney Honerkamp, photographed outside his Montrose office.

A Houston couple opens
a bed-and-breakfast
retreat in the Yucatan city

DOWN MÉRIDA WAY

By Brian Martinez | Photos by David Lewis

For many people,



the ideal vacation in Mexico is all about sand, surf, and beer. If John Truax has his way, however, his corner of Mexico will be a haven for more people who want to get away from it all.

The native Houstonian has fulfilled a lifelong dream by opening Angeles de Mérida, a bed-and-breakfast in

the Yucatán Peninsula. Locals say that about 20 percent of the population is gay."

Truax has long had a love affair with Mexico, having traveled there for vacations for years while living in Houston. When the opportunity to buy a property there opened up, Truax and his partner, an attorney, seized it.

"I had been vacationing down here for 14 years, and I knew I loved it," Truax says by phone from Mérida, located about 20 miles from the Yucatan Gulf Coast. "[My partner and I] have several American friends that live down here, and one of them is a real estate broker. He told me about the house, and when I walked in, I said to myself, 'This is it!' And my partner was like, 'Oh my God!'"

The property might have startled anyone. It was the former home to Spanish royalty in what was then New Spain, Truax says.

Mérida, established by the Spanish in 1542 on the remains of the conquered Mayan city of T'Hó, had the highest wealth per capita of any city in the world



Filled with Mexican art and antiques, like those on the opposite page, Angeles de Mérida is an ideal spot from which to tour historic sites in the city (right) and nearby Mayan ruins.

the often-overlooked city of Mérida on the Yucatán Peninsula. The first gay-owned and gay-friendly hotel of its type in this city of about 700,000, Angeles is designed to be a place for the seasoned gay traveler to experience an exciting culture.

"This is a very gay-friendly city," Truax says. "It's not talked about, but they are very accepting. It's the most liberal city in



A religious statue guards a tiled hallway and the door to the street.

until 1900. Fruit, maize, and henenquen (agave) plantations and cattle ranches helped propel the city into prosperity. The many mansions built by rich Méridanos include the building that now houses Angeles, located seven blocks from the town square, the Zocalo.

"This is a beautiful colonial house, built in about 1803," Truax says. "When families passed houses down to children, because the houses were so large, they would subdivide them. They would literally close up doors and put up walls."

Located on one of Mérida's quietest streets, Angeles is now a haven for what Truax calls the "sophisticated traveler." The house is filled with art and antiques. The four guest rooms (each with a private bath) look onto a central pool and garden.

A complimentary continental breakfast is served every day on the veranda, and catered lunches and dinners are also available.

"We're not looking for the let's-get-drunk-and-break-things crowd," Truax says. "This is definitely not a place for spring breakers, but it's a great place for anyone that appreciates culture, arts, or architecture."

Mérida's cultural offerings are one of the attractions that drew Truax from Texas. A professional dancer since high school, he received two degrees in dance and went on to pursue musical theater and work with two dance companies. After teaching dance at an area high school, running a dance center, and serving as director of the Texas Tap Ensemble, Truax needed a time out.

"I really wanted a quieter life," he



The guest rooms (clockwise from above), the main room, and the dining room occupy a 19th-century building that was once home to Spanish royalty in New Spain.

concert, as opposed to so many of us in the States that get caught up in the rat race, not having time for friends and family."

When Truax made his escape from that race to his Mexican hideaway, he found a world of culture awaiting him.

"This place is unbelievable," he says. "This city is so rich in culture and heritage. There is a free concert, music, or dance every night of the week.

We're talking professional, top-notch performers. In the old part of town, starting on Friday nights, Saturday, and all day Sunday, a lot of major streets are blocked off, and there are performances in four major areas of downtown. It could be a reggae group from Cuba in one part or maybe a classical quartet from Belize in another part."



Truax hopes to help visitors discover this cultural richness. With its location, Mérida is the gateway to the famous Mayan archaeological sites of the Yucatan.

"You're 20 minutes from a beautiful beach, and eight different Mayan ruins are all within a 20-minute to a one-hour drive," Truax says. "There are incredible →

says. "I was working 12 hours a day, six days a week, and I wanted a quieter, easier life. My goal was always to live in Mexico.

"Americans live to work. Mexicans work to live. The people down in Mérida take time out to enjoy life, whether socializing, eating, or going to a music



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The four Angeles de Mérida guest rooms surround a central pool and garden (above and below).



Owner John Truax restored the property, located near the town square, the Zocalo.



GETTING THERE

Continental Airlines (www.continental.com) offers daily direct flights to Mérida.

Aeroméxico (www.aeromexico.com) flies to Mérida with a stop in Mexico City.

The Angeles de Mérida website (www.angelesdemerida.com) provides directions from the Mérida airport. Both Hertz (www.hertz.com) and Avis (www.avis.com) rent cars at the airport. If you prefer not to drive, you can hire a taxi for the 10-mile ride to the hotel.

The State Department provides advice on traveling in Mexico, including entry requirements and safety guidelines (http://travel.state.gov/travel/tips_mexico.html). The website www.travelyucatan.com also offers good guidance on driving in Mexico.

Yucatan Today, a travel guide focusing on Mérida and the peninsula, includes information on attractions and activities. Check out www.yucantantoday.com.



restaurants, about six really top-notch restaurants, that cost about one-fifth of what you would pay in Houston. The dollar goes a long way down here—a long way."

Mérida provides terrific value for travelers, Truax says.

"Because this isn't Cancún or Puerto Vallarta, because it's not one of the worldwide tourist destinations, the prices here aren't overly inflated. You can go out here to a five-star top-notch restaurant and have a complete

dinner for two for under \$60, compared to going out in Houston where it might be \$100 a person.

There's a ballet company here, a modern dance company, a symphony, a professional theater company, and a ticket to any of those concerts is \$3 to \$5. You'd pay \$75 in the U.S."

With those extra funds, visitors can find plenty to experience, Truax says.

"There's a full month-long celebration for

Christmas. There will be tons of performances and just all these ongoing events in preparation for Christmas. New Year's Eve is huge here. There are just parties and events, concerts everywhere. Another really good time of the year is Easter.

"Any good excuse for a party," Truax says with a laugh.

Brian Martinez interviewed filmmaker Bunny Watts for our September issue.



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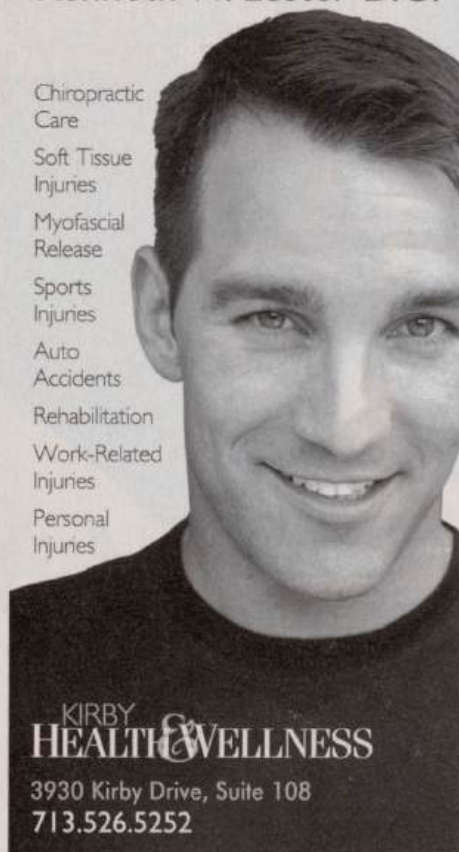
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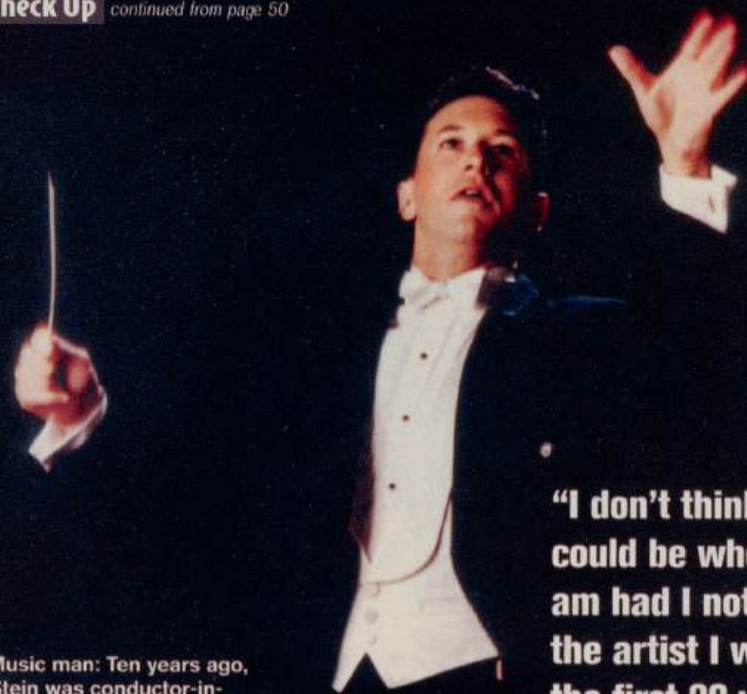
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Check Up continued from page 50



Music man: Ten years ago, Stein was conductor-in-residence with the Houston Symphony. In 1998, he began his religious study.

"I don't think I could be where I am had I not been the artist I was for the first 20 years of my life."

COURTESY HOUSTON SYMPHONY

extraordinarily broad and profound an effect as Beethoven's Ninth Symphony. "I found, in a metaphoric way, a score that I could interpret that I had never had the opportunity to play and one whose impact I found even more meaningful."

Wilshire Boulevard Temple is the oldest Jewish congregation in southern California, having been established 142 years ago. Not the first gay rabbi in this Reformed synagogue, he is however the first gay rabbi to have a partner. Although Rabbi Stein has encountered some Reformed colleagues who do not believe same-sex couples should have the right to marry, he says he and his partner have felt nothing but a hearty welcome. Anti-theologically, a pair of very Orthodox cousins of Stein's welcome him and his partner into their home, he says, "like we were a married couple, no question. The labels are not accurate. We have been lovingly and warmly embraced by this entire community, by the board, by my colleagues, by the staff, and by the congregation."

A congregation with 2,500 families, Wilshire offers programs for the gay and lesbian members of the synagogue and the community at large. One new program offered this fall is called "From Generation to (New) Generation." The seminar is designed for lesbian and gay parents. "We know that the lesbian and gay parents in our congregation have unique challenges in their lives as they raise kids," Stein says. "We want to be sensitive to that and

address that. We have connected not only with the two predominantly lesbian and gay synagogues here in L.A., but also with the large, simply Reformed Jewish synagogues and have welcomed their lesbian and gay parents to the seminar."

How does he know he has made the right career change? Rabbi Stein has experiences practically every day that confirm it—in his office, in a classroom, in a hospital, at a cemetery, under the wedding chuppah. Recently, a woman in a class he has been teaching broke into tears, telling Stein how meaningful his class has been to her. She explained how she has decided to become Jewish, and she asked Stein to be her sponsoring rabbi. Tearfully himself, the rabbi confesses, "I wanted to thank her. It's a blessing, an enormous privilege. I should be paying for that privilege rather than getting paid for it."

As one might expect, some who know of Rabbi Stein's past ask if he misses conducting. He still enjoys the opportunity, he says, although it comes up very rarely. Though he loves his new life, he doesn't feel like he missed opportunities by not switching over sooner. "I don't think I could be where I am had I not been the artist I was for the first 20 years of my life. I needed to do that. I believe very strongly that I am where I belong. If you ask me to conduct, I would love to conduct. But I don't need it. I need to be a rabbi."

Eric Dieckman profiled Shelley Kennedy for our November issue.

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GOOD WORKS. For the 18th year, **Jerry Atwood** rallies his musical troops for A Christmas Songfest. The sing-along takes place December 5 at Hornberger Conference Center. Proceeds benefit Houston Challenge Foundation and Montrose Counseling Center.

For the 10th year, AIDS Foundation Houston collects new, unwrapped presents as part of the Red Ribbon Toy Drive, the annual effort first launched by the National Leather Association: Houston. On December 5, Bayou City Boys club collects toys for the effort at its holiday bash at the Memorial swankiend of **Michael Flynn** and **Richard Maier**. Organizers of the first Heights Holiday Market on December 10 also encourage shoppers to bring a toy for the drive. Vendors at Artisans' Corner include masterful woodcrafters **Jo Alcade** and **Leslie Ravey**.

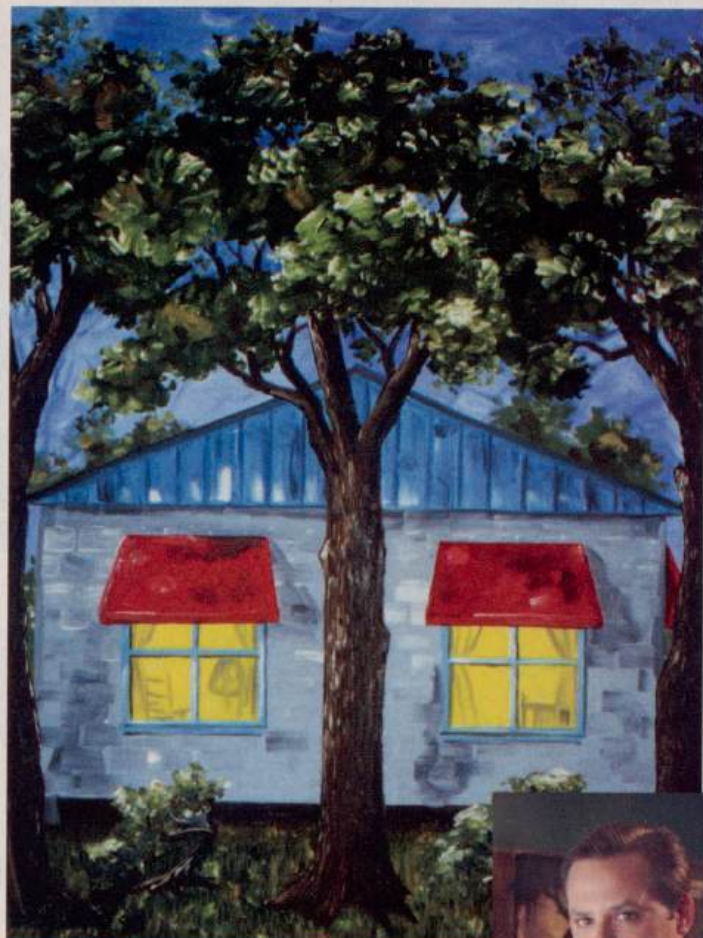
The good folk at New Covenant Christian Church are also collecting toys for kids. Rev. **Todd Williams** and his flock worship at the Houston GLBT Community Center.

On December 7, **Jesse** and **Pamela Pierce** will host A Holiday Schmooze in their home benefiting the Center for AIDS. Interior designer **Michael Dale** is honorary chair, and **Julie Greenwood** is event chair.

Sonna Alton at Montrose Clinic called to report that **Jean Moran** of Rimbrandts Glass Studio in Spring will contribute to the clinic for every holiday purchase ordered at www.rimbrandts.com. Alton pointed out that shoppers should enter the code "MontroseClinic69" (stop sniggering) on the total page.

Kermit Eisenhut has created cards for PAWS Houston. Proceeds support Pets Are Wonderful Support, which helps humans living with terminal illnesses care for their animal companions.

IN YOUR NEIGHBORHOOD. On December 8, Theatre Under The Stars



PAINTING: COURTESY TROY BROUSSARD; BROUSSARD: BERT TIEGE

NO PLACE LIKE HOME.

Through December 30, the Zigler Museum of Art in Jennings, Louisiana, presents *Home for the Holiday*, an exhibition of paintings by **Troy Broussard** (including *The Broussard Fishing Camp*, pictured). The museum in Broussard's hometown will also show pieces from his personal art collection as well as works by Michael Anderson, his Houston painting partner. Broussard (inset, photographed at the Zigler) is *OutSmart* design contributor.



hosts Out at TUTS in conjunction with *Singin' in the Rain*. The evening, sponsored by *OutSmart*, includes an après-show cabaret with cast members at Artista in Hobby Center.

Playwright is one of the roles for the multi-hyphenated **Ray Hill**. As we prepared to go to press, we received word that he will perform his powerful one-man show *Ray Hill: The Prison Years* on December 20 in Chelsea Market (in Suite C-140, by day a defensive driving school behind the defunct Butera's). "This will be the last

performance of all of the material since I am cutting out half an hour to create a more road-able show to open in Philadelphia next fall," Hill e-mailed.

The next night, Hill will present an unnamed work based on the notorious 1991 hate-crime murder of **Paul Broussard** and the Woodlands teenagers convicted in the crime.

MAIL CALL. From D.C., **Darin Adams** wrote that he is included in the December *Out* as one of the top 100 success stories of 2004. At *OutSmart*, we have a special fondness for Darin. Until he graduated last spring from Baylor, he was our contact there and even made our magazine available at that right-wing Baptist stronghold.

JINGLE BELL JOCK. In 2002, former NFL nose tackle **Esera Tuaolo** made news when he burst from the closet. Now he has released a sweet, R&B-tinged holiday EP, *First Christmas*. A dollar from each disc ordered through Tuaolo's website, www.BigE98.com, will benefit PFLAG; Minnesota AIDS Project; Camp Heartland, a Wisconsin retreat for youngsters affected by HIV/AIDS; and The Trevor Project, the California-based group that promotes tolerance for gay and questioning teens.

HOLIDAY EAR. Speaking of music, cozying up to the radio console and listening to **JD Doyle**'s holiday shows on *Queer Voices* is a tradition at my house. Tune in to KPFT on December 13 and 20, beginning at 8 p.m., for this year's shows. Doyle promises an interview with **RuPaul** about her Christmas album along with some surprises. Check Doyle's website, www.queermusicheritage.com, to hear archived programs and a saucy Internet-only show, featuring, he reveals, "stuff I could not, not, not play on the radio." Ho, ho, ho! ■

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Ellen DeGeneres

(Parade, 10/31/04, Ben Fong-Torres)

When I bring up the hot-button topic of same-sex marriage, DeGeneres says: "I absolutely believe in equal rights, whether it's marriage or any other issue. I want to know that if something happens to me, that Alex [Alexandra Hedison]—who spends her life with me and shares everything with me and supports me in every way—would be taken care of. It's really about equal rights."

Jennifer Tilly

(The Advocate, 11/9/04, Michael Rowe)

"I would be very happy and proud to have a gay son or daughter," she says. "I would be sad because I know they'd have more of an uphill road to climb because of the inhospitable climate in America." She's clearly sincere, but in true gay style, she's not getting all serious. "I've thought about having kids," she says dryly. "But I lie down till the urge passes."

Dave Navarro

(of Jane's Addiction)

(The Advocate, 11/9/04, Kurt B. Reighley)

In one especially racy passage of [his first book] *Don't Try This at Home*, Navarro recalls making out with former Nine Inch Nails guitarist Richard Patrick during the first Lollapalooza tour. He's also swapped spit with Chili Peppers singer Anthony Kiedis (in their "Warped" video) and locked lips frequently with Perry Falwell during Jane's heyday. Alas, the hard rocker claims these experiments have never gotten him rock-hard.

"I've tried to dabble in that world, and it's just not me," he admits with a shrug. "I've never been sexually aroused by a man. But I have yet to kiss Johnny Depp, so you never know..."

Rupert Everett

(The Advocate, 11/9/04, Michael Giltz)

Michael Giltz: ... I know you went to Catholic school. Did you practice, or are you practicing?

Rupert Everett: Am I a practicing Catholic? No, I'm a practicing Buddhist.

Not even for your mother at Christmas?

Yes, I do [go to church then], and I love Christianity. But the Catholic Church and Christianity in general I find unsatisfactory, because since the third century they've been hijacked by neocons. If you look at Christianity before the third century, you discover a very different thing.

TWO YEARS AGO
THIS MONTH

Conan O'Brien

(Late Night with Conan O'Brien, 12/02)

"Mexico City announced that it is forming a new police unit with officers dressed like cowboys with cowboy hats and spurs. In a related story, Mexico City also announced it's gay."

Amy Poehler



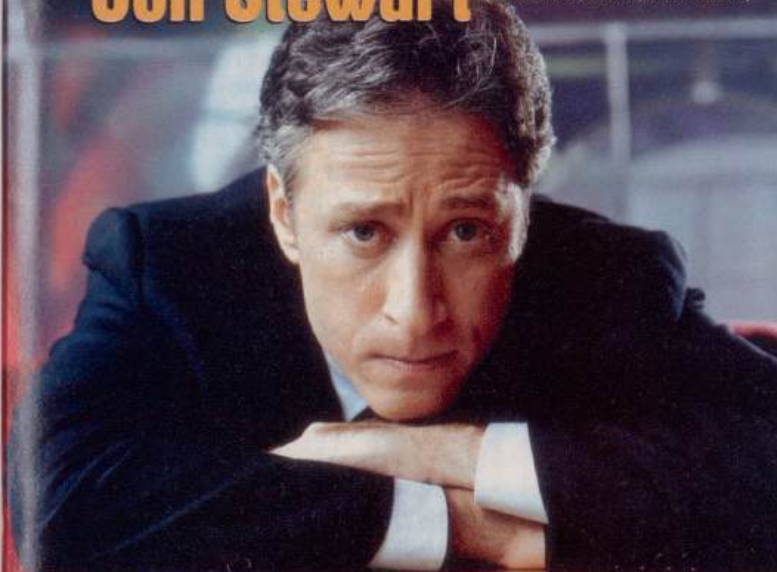
TEWEEKENDUPDA

(Saturday Night Live, 10/30/04, NBC)

"According to a new Democratic poll released today, 50 percent of Vice President Cheney's daughters are still gay."

Jon Stewart

(The Advocate, 11/9/04, Alonso Duralde)



Alonso Duralde: Many gay people have a tough time understanding gay Republicans. Do they make any more sense to straight people?

Jon Stewart (host of Comedy Central's The Daily Show): In the universe of gay Republicans are Jews for Jesus and Retarded Death Row Inmates for Bush. They don't reflect the larger group, and they're not aware of what's in their best interest.

Queer Quotes

Compiled by Blase DiStefano

Lewis Black

(The Daily Show, 11/10/04, Comedy Central)

Lewis Black: Last week, Americans did something they can be proud of... OK, two things: One, they *didn't* watch *My Big Fat Obnoxious Boss*, and two, they got up off their asses and voted in record numbers assuring themselves a legislative body that is truly representative of our electorate.

So who are these modern-day Mr. Smiths, and what are the issues they take with them to Washington?

Well, in South Carolina, newly elected senator Jim DeMint won his seat in part by arguing that gays should not be allowed to marry. And that's just for starters.

Cut to DeMint speaking: "If a person is a practicing homosexual, they should not be teaching in our schools."

Black: So much for the school play!

By the way, South Carolina's school system ranks 49th out of all states. On the bright side, most of these kids think that's out of a hundred.

But Mr. DeMint isn't the only incoming senator who recognizes that homosexuality is this nation's number-one problem. During his campaign, our new senator from Oklahoma, Tom Coburn, told voters at a town hall meeting, quote: "Lesbianism is so rampant in some of the schools in southeast Oklahoma that they'll only let one girl go to the bathroom. Now think about it. Think about that issue."

Think about the issue of rampant high school lesbianism? OK. [Starts to get hot and bothered.]...

So there you have it. Just a few of the newest members of the United States senate, people who will be helping our president choose up to three new Supreme Court justices.

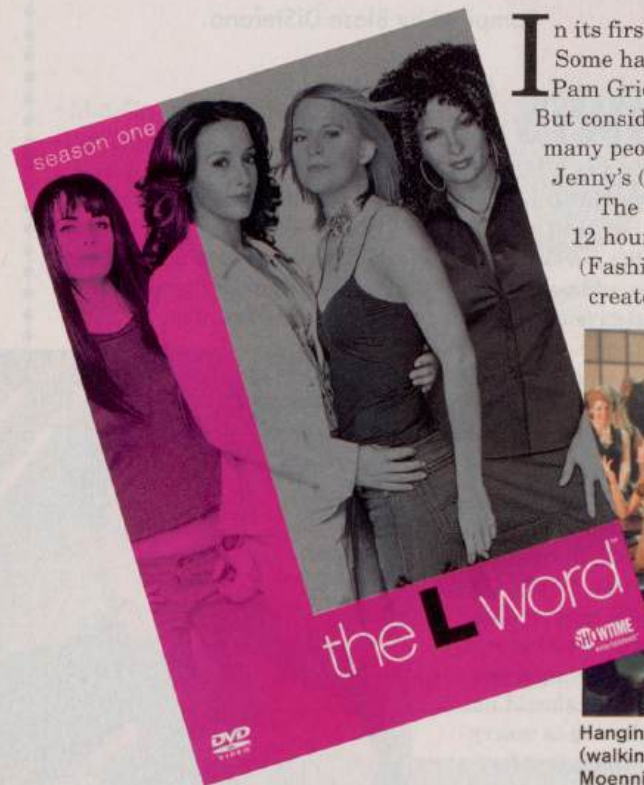
Congratulations, Christian right—I'm Jewish, and you've even got *me* praying!



Lewis Black (seen here in a publicity photo from Comedy Central's The Daily Show): What does the Christian right have him doing?

THE L WORD

It's OK, you can say it



In its first year, *The L Word* garnered national publicity almost immediately. Some have criticized the sexy cast—including Jennifer Beals, Mia Kirshner, and Pam Grier—saying it does not represent the whole of the lesbian community. But considering the drama held Showtime's highest ratings for the season, not too many people are upset by the almost total lack of mullet hair styles. Watching Jenny's (Kirshner) journey of self-discovery more than makes up for it.

The five-DVD collection boasts the hour-and-a-half-long pilot and an extra 12 hours of lesbian drama. The fifth disc is dedicated to special features.

(Fashionistas and clothes-whores are in for a treat.) There's a puppet show created by the cast, a Fashion Extra!, a look at the wardrobe process for the

characters, advice on where to find clothes to copy the look of your favorite character, a behind-the-scenes look at the show, a preview of season two, and even more. • From Showtime Entertainment (www.sho.com).

—Eric A.T. Dieckman



Hanging out in the L world (l-r): Leisha Hailey, Mia Kirshner (walking toward table), Laurel Holloman, and Katherine Moennig star in the high-rated Showtime series.

MORE DVD/VHS PREVIEWS

Violet's Visit



Set in Australia, young Violet (Rebecca Smart) leads a life full of teen angst. When Violet's mum introduces her to yet another new "dad," she's had enough. Frustrated by her mother and being thrown into the midst of her myriad relationships, Violet runs away from home in search of her biological father. With an address provided by her grandmother, she knocks on the door to surprise her long lost dad, Alec (Graham Harvey). But surprise, Pete (David Franklin), Alec's partner of eight years—who knew nothing of Violet—is the one to open the door. Although Alec is at first reticent about this reminder of his past, Pete warms up to her and coaxes Alec into a trial stay. Told with humor and sensitivity, this is a more honest, realistic, and contemporary version of *Three Men and a Cradle* and *My Two Dads*. • 1998. Directed by Richard Turner. • From Ariztical Entertainment (www.ariztical.com). —ED

Bulgarian Lovers

Daniel (Fernando Guillén Cuervo) has one vice: picking up Bulgarians living illegally in Madrid. When Daniel finds one such man, the comely Kyril (Dritan Biba), the two give in to a night of sexual abandon, leaving



Daniel irrepressibly smitten. Though the feelings are mutual, Kyril takes advantage of the wealthy Daniel and involves him in increasingly criminal activity. When Kyril's girlfriend, Kalina (Anita Sinkovic), arrives at Daniel's doorstep, Kyril insists she stay. Daniel's world topples over a little more each day and even though he sees it happening, he's willing to sacrifice everything. FYI: Director Eloy de la Iglesia was the first prominent Spanish intellectual to publicly declare his homosexuality. • 2003. Based on the novel by Eduardo Mendicutti. Co-written by de la Iglesia. • From TLA Releasing (www.tlareleasing.com). —ED

Even Cowgirls Get the Blues



This adaptation of a Tom Robbins novel boasts Uma Thurman as the lead character, Sissy Hankshaw, a hitchhiker with enormous thumbs. Also starring are Keanu Reeves, Angie Dickinson, John Hurt as "The Countess," and Pat "remember me from *Happy Days*?" Morita as "The Chink." Rain Phoenix debuts as Bonanza Jellybean, a lesbian cowgirl. Jellybean and Hankshaw meet at a "beauty ranch" where Hankshaw is scheduled to model

for a shoot against a backdrop of mating whooping cranes. But that's not oddball enough for a Tom Robbins tale; Hankshaw and Jellybean drug the cranes with peyote instead. Openly gay auteur Gus Van Sant lends authenticity to the gay sensibilities of Robbins' story; k.d. lang adds some lesbian cowgirl flavor. • 1993. Directed by Gus Van Sant. • From New Line Home Entertainment (www.newline.com). —ED

Iron Ladies II



Thailand is famous for its kathoey, performers better known as lady-boys. These Thais are considered the most convincing and lovely transnannies on the globe. Kathoeyes are significantly more accepted than cross-dressers are here, as long as the kathoey are on stage.

Put them in the sports arena and it's a whole new ballgame. This follow-up to the tale of an almost exclusively gay/transgendered volleyball team (loosely based on a true story) takes the initial movie's glamour and adds extra sports action and sequins. When a hunky teammate leaves the group to start his own rival team, the girls venture off to China to woo a former player-turned-cabaret star out of retirement. More than a film about the T in GLBT, this is a story of triumph in the →

A DAME AND A JEW

The Dame Edna Experience: The Christmas Specials



It's Christmastime in Oz, possums. Stuff a little Dame in your stockings. Well, actually, the Dame in question is rather large. Stuff her anyway. She'll tickle you red and green whether you've been naughty or nice. You deserve to let the Grande Dame roast your chestnuts. • Take the evening off, spice up some eggnog, and spend *A Night on Mount Edna*. Her infamous monologues are interrupted by complete strangers such as Roger Moore, the obsessively theistic Mel Gibson, bombshell Gina Lollobrigida, and a score of other holiday luminaries. Extras include Dame Edna's Christmas Address to the Commonwealth and the third and final of Dame Edna's Audience programs: *One More Audience with Dame Edna Everage*. But don't expect Edna to put the "ho" in your "ho, ho, ho." The Dame is too refined for such tawdry chicanery, or is she? • From BBC Video (www.bbcamerica.shop.com). —ED

The Hebrew Hammer



Who's the certified circumcised private dick that's a sex machine to all the chicks? Meet Semitic Super Stud, Mordechai Jefferson Carver, a.k.a. "The Hebrew Hammer" (Adam Goldberg). • When a psychotic Santa (Andy Dick) tries to destroy Chanukah by hypnotizing Jewish children with bootlegged copies of the Christmas classic *It's a Wonderful Life*, it's up to the Hebrew Hammer to save the day. Together with Mohammed (Mario Van Peebles), the Hammer hunts down the renegade Santa and makes the holiday season safe for all. • *The Hebrew Hammer* is Jew-friendly and black-friendly, but not very gay-friendly. Seems nasty ole Santa is gay. But as politically incorrect as the film is, it's funny, anyway, especially since Santa is sleeping with Tiny Tim (not the singer). • 2003. Directed by Jonathan Kesselman. • From Paramount Home Entertainment (www.paramount.com/homeentertainment). More info: www.comedycentral.com. —Troy Carrington



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GIRLS AND WIVES

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The Stepford Wives



The special collector's edition DVD of the '04 version of the 1975 film adds more fun to an already campy redo. • After TV exec Joanna Eberhart (Nicole Kidman) suffers a series of traumatic events, she has a nervous breakdown, prompting her husband, Walter (Matthew Broderick), to whisk her away from Manhattan and relocate to the safe-planned Connecticut community of Stepford. As she recuperates, Joanna makes a new friend, Bobbie Markowitz (Bette Midler), a nebbish writer and recovering alcoholic. Soon Joanna and Bobbie notice the other wives—among them Claire Wellington (Glenn Close)—there make Martha Stewart look like Roseanne. They're too perfect, and they're more adept at making incredible fruit compote than making their own decisions. Something's going on. • The trio of grande dames—Kidman, Close, and Midler—deliver great performances, in spite of rumors of animosity on the set. Midler especially delivers in terms of comic timing. Also residing in Stepford is a gay couple: Jerry (openly gay David Marshall Grant) and Roger (Roger Bart, who shells out gobs of great lines). Out screenwriter Paul Rudnick really finds the humor in the original '75 story and brings it to full bloom. • 2004. Directed by Frank Oz. • From Paramount Home Entertainment (www.paramount.com/homeentertainment). —ED

DVD/VHS continued from page 58

face of challenge. • 2003. Written and directed by Yongyoot Thongkoon. • From Strand Releasing Home Video (www.strandreleasing.com). —ED

Secret Things



Two young women discover the power of sex to get what they want in the male-dominated business world. Nathalie (Coralie Revel), a performance artist-stripper, instructs her new friend, the beautiful but inexperienced Sandrine (Sabrina Seylve-cou), on the art of seduction. Without delay they put their skills to the test at a Parisian bank, where both rise to the top. But they meet their match in the ruthless son of the bank's president—a vain, unbridled, power-hungry monster. • 2002. Directed by Jean-Claude Brisseau. French with English subtitles. • From First Run Features (www.firstrunfeatures.com). —Suzie Lynde

200 American



Handsome Conrad's (Matt Walton) not quite ready of a new relationship, but he is ready for some hot action, so he does something he's never done before—he rents a hustler. When he opens the door, Conrad's pleased to see he's hired a very sexy Australian. Ian's (Sean Matic) fee of 200 American dollars strikes Conrad as a bargain, but he's puzzled as to why such a sweet and sexy guy is selling himself in the first place. And what seems like a simple proposition at night quickly gets complicated by day. • 2003. Written and directed by Richard LeMay. • Available December 14 from Wolfe Video (www.wolfevideo.com or 1-800-GET-WOLFE). —TC

Shiner



Shiner revolves around three pairs of people who find intimacy only through violence and humiliation. The central figures are Danny (Derris Nile) and Tony (Scott Stepp), two "straight" guys who initially get their kicks by beating up gay men in back alleys. In time, Danny develops his own taste for pain, and entices Tony to beat him bloody each night, until they both collapse in the same bed—and in each other's arms. • 2004. Directed by Christian Calson. • From TLA Releasing (www.tlavideo.com). —TC

Last Dance



Director Mirra Bank follows the Pilobolus Dance Theatre and author-illustrator Maurice Sendak as they collaborate on a dance-theater work that honors a haunting holocaust legacy. *Last Dance* weaves rehearsal footage, interviews, Nazi propaganda footage, and performance into a thrilling insight into the creative process. The film holds nothing back as philosophies clash, confrontations abound, and artistic disaster threatens at every turn. But in the end we are rewarded as Pilobolus dancers give life to a stark and stunning dancework. • 2002. From First Run Features (www.firstrunfeatures.com). —SL ■

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by Blase DiStefano

OUT AT SHOWTIME

Showtime's president is gay and knows a thing or two about diversity

Diversity. It's a word bandied about, and many people—read: the far right—find it rather distasteful, probably because it implies a mixture of cultures and sexual identities. However, one man is living the word.

Robert Greenblatt, the openly gay president of Showtime Networks, has created a truly impressive body of work, work that proves his commitment to improving the lives of minorities by including us in Showtime's programming.

His most recent effort is *The L Word*, the steamy lesbian drama that debuted in January 2004 and garnered the highest ratings of the season for Showtime.

Before assuming his current position at Showtime in July 2003, Greenblatt and fellow executive producer David Janollari formed The Greenblatt Janollari Studio in 1997. This independent film and television company was responsible for many productions including *The Hughleys* and the critically acclaimed *Six Feet Under*, for which Greenblatt was awarded a Golden Globe for Best Television Drama Series.

Among Greenblatt's other TV credits are Gregory Nava's *American Family*, a critically acclaimed Latino drama, and UPN's recent hit *Eve*, a multi-ethnic sitcom starring hip-hop artist and actress Eve.

On October 23 in Dallas, Greenblatt received the Elizabeth Birch Award from the Human Rights Campaign at the Dallas-Fort Worth Black Tie Dinner. The award was presented to Greenblatt for his significant contribution of national scope to lesbian and gay equality. Attending the dinner in support of Greenblatt were *Queer as Folk* stars Sharon Gless, Peter Paige, and Robert Gant; *The L Word* stars Pam Grier and Leisha Hailey; and *Huff* star Blythe Danner (also Will's mom on *Will & Grace*).

Greenblatt doesn't stop at television. He is also executive producer of several feature films, including *Home of Phobia*, which was featured at this year's Sundance Film Festival.



Robert Greenblatt (c) was the recipient of an award at the recent Dallas-Fort Worth Black Tie Dinner. A few of his admirers traveled to the event to honor him: (l-r) Blythe Danner, Pam Grier, Leisha Hailey, and an *OutSmart* cover girl Sharon Gless.

SPEAKING OF SHOWTIME

Mark your calendars: The second season of *The L Word* premieres on Showtime on February 20, 2005.

The drama focuses on the lives, careers, and romantic relationships of a group of lesbians in Los Angeles. The 13-episode, one-hour drama's cast includes Jennifer Beals, Erin Daniels, Leisha Hailey, Laurel Holloman, Mia Kirshner, Katherine Moennig, and Pam Grier.

Sandra Bernhard is set to join the series as a guest star for multiple episodes. She will play a straight author who has a contentious interaction with Mia Kirshner's character. More info: www.sho.com.



Jennifer Beals (l) and Laurel Holloman star in *The L Word*.

Also in February: *Reefer Madness*, a raucous film musical adapted from the hit stage musical, which is based loosely on the cult exploitation film of the 1930s.

Steven Weber and openly gay Alan Cumming have been signed to star. Actress and classically trained dancer Neve Campbell will make her television musical debut. Also, Kristen Bell and Christian Campbell (Neve's brother), who co-starred as the hilarious star-crossed young lovers in the off-Broadway production of *Reefer*, will reprise their roles in the movie version, as will John Kassir and Robert Torti. The stage version's creative team will also translate *Reefer Madness* to film, including veteran director Andy Fickman, Kevin Murphy (book and lyrics), and Dan Studney (book and music). *More TV* →



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Television continued from previous page

CARSON'S CHRISTMAS QUEER CHEER

Queer Eye's Carson Kressley hosts
a special Christmas special

Carson Kressley of *Queer Eye for the Straight Guy* brings holiday cheer home this year by narrating *The Christmas Special Christmas Special*, a program that pays tribute to the specials of Christmas past.

The *Christmas Special Christmas Special* showcases the genre by featuring interviews, clips, and production stills from numerous programs spanning the decades. The gamut of Christmas-themed television, the upcoming special highlights everything from the classic opera *Ahmad and the Night Visitors* (1951) to the irreverent cartoon *South Park: A Very Crappy Christmas* (2000) to the recent *Nick at Nite Holiday Special* (2003).

The special explores how pop culture and the public's view influenced this genre.

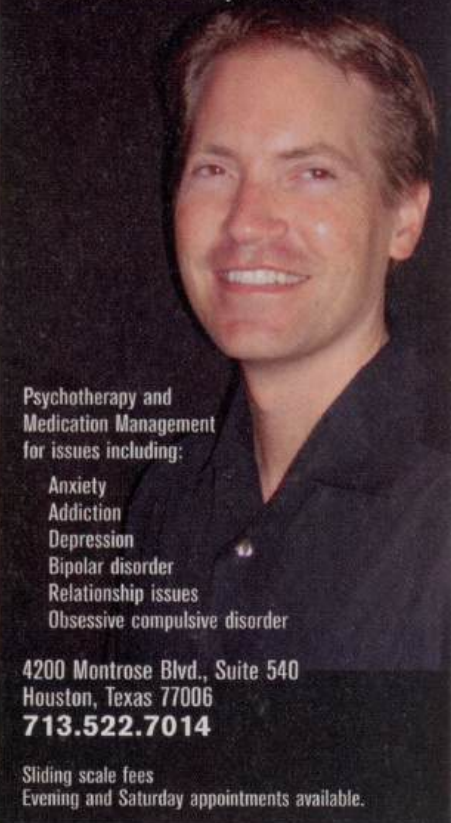
Premieres Tuesday, December 14 (9-10 p.m.) on Bravo (with an encore airing on Trio, Sunday, December 19, 8-9 p.m.).



Bah humbug: Not to worry, *Queer Eye's* Carson Kressley gets cheery for a Christmas special.

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Dads and daughters: Stars of *Too Cool for Christmas* include (l-r) Adam Harrington, Jodelle Ferland, Barclay Hope, Brooke Nevin

A COOL CHRISTMAS FOR THE FAMILY

Here! TV, the nation's first gay and lesbian premium cable network, believes in Santa . . . or at least they are presenting a family film in which the real Santa exists. • *Too Cool for Christmas* is the story of a fashion-conscious teen Lindsay (Brooke Nevin) who is too cool for it all. She and her best friend Paige (Adrienne Carter) have secretly planned a trip to a ski resort where they will coincidentally meet the best-looking boy in school. Unfortunately, Lindsay's two dads (Barclay Hope and Adam Harrington) want Christmas together as a family, so they forbid her from going. But Lindsay is determined to go and joins Paige for some last-minute shopping. Lindsay delights in mocking Christmas by ridiculing the mall Santa

(George Hamilton). But this Santa is the real thing, and he confides that he and Mrs. Claus (Donna Mills) have lost the spark in their relationship and he has no idea how to get it back. Lindsay, being Lindsay, gives him a makeover, and she finds out that he really is Santa and that he needs help delivering gifts on Christmas Eve. • Does she learn the real meaning of Christmas? Does the pope wear dresses? • *Too Cool for Christmas* airs throughout the month of December. • On satellite systems, here! TV is offered as a pay-per-view (PPV) service; on cable systems, it is offered on either a Video On Demand (VOD) or Subscription Video On Demand (SVOD) platform. More info: www.heretv.com. ■

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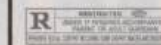
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From the Writer-Director of "Gods and Monsters"
Liam Neeson Laura Linney Peter Sarsgaard

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SELECT THEATRES NOVEMBER 24

Bob, Kim & Staff

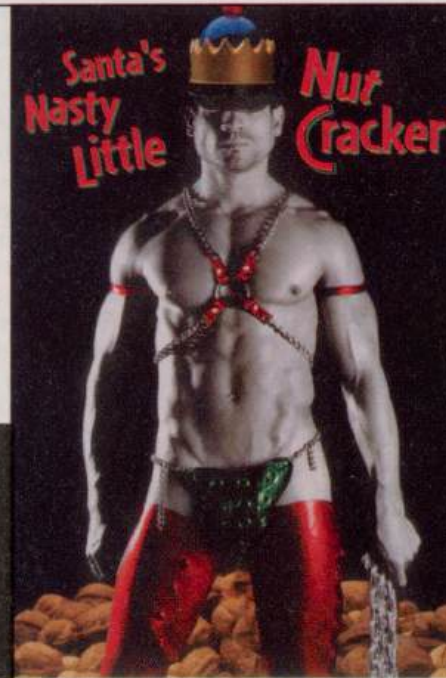
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MAKE THE SEASON GAY

With gifts of music by queer talents

Having a hard time figuring out what to get that special lesbian, gay man, bisexual, transgender, or questioning person on your holiday list? Why not give music by a member of the queer community?

Openly queer **Michael Stipe** is one-third of the groundbreaking modern rock band **R.E.M.**, whose album **Around the Sun** (Warner Brothers) was recently released. Stipe and company have struggled to capitalize on the artistic achievements and merits of the back-to-back masterworks *Automatic for the People* (1992) and *Monster* (1994), and *Around the Sun* doesn't do much for the cause. A seriously low-key effort, there are a few minor bursts of energy, such as on the synth-beats of "Electron Blue" and the tasteful funk of "The Outsider," although it took three listens for Q-Tip's rap on that track not to sound like an afterthought. "Make It All Okay" feels like a musical response to religious fundamentalists, with



R.E.M. (Michael Stipe, center)

the line "Well Jesus loves me fine/And your words fall flat this time," and "Final Straw" is one of R.E.M.'s most political statements, a restrained rage against the Bush/Cheney administration. Stipe sounds the most invested on "Wanderlust," and when he sings, "I want it to be brilliant/I want it to be sweet," it is momentarily brilliant and sweet. Sadly, too much sameness threatens to sink the whole affair, not making it "The Worst Joke Ever," as the song says, but far from the best that R.E.M. has to offer.

Reyna Larson made a name for herself as the front person for the band Mabel, and there were many people who were disappointed when the band called it quits a couple of years ago. As leader of the band, Larson was the most visible and recognizable component, which ought to make her transition into being a solo artist a smooth one. The bucking bronco on the cover of **Some Folks Need a Name** (Clay-head) and the inside photo of Larson in a

cowboy hat are an indication of what is inside, a collection of insurgent country-colored tunes, complete with a lap steel guitar, mandolin, dobro, and banjo, among other instruments. Larson fills these songs (most of which are originals) with her powerful alto growl, making them as comfortable a fit as a pair of snug but well-worn Wranglers. Standouts include the tearjerkers "Say My Name" and "Squeezebox," the bluesy stomp of "54321," the sexy strut of "Me Slowly," the infectious swing of "Streets of New Orleans," and the gospel plea of "Good Lord Above."

As a member of Roy, openly gay musician **Brian Cook** sang about wanting to marry his boyfriend, but not being able to, on the song "Never Getting Married." Cook and his boyfriend have since married, and Cook has moved on to another band. That band, scream-o-noise purveyors **These Arms Are Snakes**, have released the complex **Oxeneers or The Lion Sleeps When Its Antelope Go Home** (Jade Tree), which is sure to be as off-putting to some as it is appealing to others. (These Arms Are

Snakes perform in Houston on December 13 at Mary Jane's Fat Cat.)

Continuing in the jazzy vein of their last few albums, Irish lesbian duo **Zrazy** (Maria Walsh and Carole Nelson), who accompany themselves on flute, sax, and other instruments, have returned with the verdant **Dream On** (Alfi). Also backed by a quintet, Zrazy's songs have a dreamy and seductive quality, embodied in songs such as "I Know When You Are Near," "Rain," and "Keep It Real," and the nine-minute "Drive."

Spanning a 12-year period, the songs on **Purpose of Love: A Tim DiPasqua Songbook—Volume 1** (timdipasqua.com) qualify this disc as the perfect purchase for the cabaret/show-tune lover in your midst. Familiar names and voices from the cabaret realm, including Brian Lane Green, Scott Coulter, Baby Jane Dexter, and Tom Andersen wrap themselves in Tim DiPasqua's songs, written between 1987 and 1999, that are at turns humorous ("My Favorite Note," "You Make Me Nuts"), dramatic ("Beach in the Blinding Sun," "Somewhere Between," "As It's Meant

to Be," "It Shouldn't Have Happened") and just plain queer ("Big Hairy Man").

The words *lesbian* and *singer/songwriter* just sound right together. **Steff Mahan**, the lesbian singer/songwriter, embodies that pairing on her new album, **42.50** (steffmahan.com). More Nashville (where she is based) than insurgent, Mahan's songs sound as if they were intended for sing-alongs on cross-country trips. From stories of traveling on a budget (the title track) to tales of escape ("Leavin' Money") to songs about the things we get used to ("Rock in My Shoe") to having a good chuckle in spite of everything ("Laughin'"), Mahan's songs have a universal appeal.

A definite shift has occurred in the music and style of **The Atari Star**. The band's first two full-length albums were practically dazzling in their beauty, made even more so considering the band members' punk rock roots. On **Prayer + Pretend** (Johann's Face), the trio, which includes gay front man Marc →



The Atari Star

GrooveOut Shorts

Various Artists
Keep Hope Alive



Those who like their dance music equal parts mind, body, and soul will surely embrace the unique concept album that is **Keep Hope Alive**. The album—a solid set of future deep house classics—is a "We Are the World" project which brings together some of the most respected contemporary dance music artists in the business to benefit LIFEbeat (The Music Industry Fights AIDS). Blaze, Ultra Naté, among many others, donated their voices, time, songs, and songwriting royalties to the project. It's a great little album by good people for a good cause. From King Street Sounds (www.kingstreetsounds.com). For more info: www.westendrecords.com. —Troy Carrington

Rufus Wainwright
Want Two



This 12-track CD comes on the heels of Wainwright's acclaimed *Want One* from 2003. The new one continues the themes explored on the previous recording, though the openly gay singer/songwriter has said that *Want Two* contains

"the more daunting tracks, the operatic, weird stuff, some heavy numbers that related to my classical sensibilities." Tracks include such intriguing titles as "An Old Whore's Diet" and "The Gay Messiah." Included is a 22-track DVD which features performances filmed at a live concert at San Francisco's historic Fillmore Auditorium. Elton John calls Wainwright the greatest living songwriter and an "as-yet unheralded American treasure." From Geffen Records (www.geffen.com). For more info: www.rufuswainwright.com. —TC

Transcendence Gospel Choir
Whoever Believes



For months, the CD from the world's first transgender chorus languished unheard in my office. Then, on the dreadful morning after Election Day, I decided to pop it into my CD drive on my iBook while I worked. What a tuneful tonic for a Blue State voter living in a Red State! Transcendence, formed in 2001 in San Francisco, swings with a heavenly voice. Given the influence of the morals squad in the presidential contest, the rollicking opener, "Jesus, Be a Fence Around Me" (penned by the great Sam Cooke) takes on extra significance, recalling the one-liner, "Lord, protect me from your followers." The rest of this release, a 2004 OutMusic Awards winner, includes the rousing "Bless Me (The Prayer of Jabez)," featuring a powerhouse turn from the Rev. Dr. Yvette Flunder, pastor of City of Refuge United Church of Christ, where Transcendence is based. A documentary on the choir from

Campfire Films is in post-production. From Amor Music. More info: www.tgchoir.org. —Tim Brookover

David Sisco
Here I Am: A Musical Personal Ad



This 16-song cycle from composer/singer David Sisco follows the stations in the life of a young gay man, from elementary-school stirrings through coming out and beyond. The sprightly numbers are best, including "Locker Room" (with the lyric "What's a gay to do?/Enjoy the view") and the exasperated "I'm Giving Up on Gay." Sisco and playwright/lyricist Tom Gualtieri are developing a new musical based on *Washington Square*, the Henry James novel. From One Soul Records (www.onesoulrecords.com). More info: www.davidsisco.com. —TB

Various Artists
Marry Me



Marry Me is a double-CD compilation containing songs by over 20 gay, lesbian, straight, and transgendered artists. The first CD, entitled *Ceremony*, contains songs celebrating love and commitment. The second CD, appropriately named *Reception*, contains songs that will rock any reception. All the songs celebrate love across different musical →

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GrooveOut Shorts

continued from
page 66

genres: RuPaul's dance-floor anthem "Love Is Love"; Bill Budd's sincere love song "Again"; Marcella Detroit's gospel-like "I Wish You Love"; the serenade "You and I" by Yolanda; the folksy "Jill and Jill" by Jenn Lindsay; the Motown-flavored "Ain't No Mountain High Enough" by Sade Pendarvis and Nicolas Ferrer; and the R&B track "Bashert" by Ari Gold. Every artist donated the rights to their recordings specifically for this project. Fifty percent of proceeds from the wholesale price of the *Marry Me* compilation will benefit the ACLU Foundation's Lesbian & Gay Rights and AIDS projects. The projects' goal is equal treatment for LGBT people and people with HIV/AIDS, and they currently play a key role in the growing movement for marriage equality. From Figjam Records (www.figjamrecords.com). —Suzie Lynde

Keyth Lawrence and the Purple Circle Figures



Keyth Lawrence's most defining artistic traits include a character-driven, storied style of songwriting, an acrobatic and emotive voice that tells it, and a classically inspired powerhouse style of piano playing that falls somewhere between Chopin and Jerry Lee Lewis. The openly gay singer says, "Figures is a solid story in which the main character's travels are pivotal to his discoveries and losses. The shape and design of his life are constantly changing throughout, as we learn how this one man adjusts to personal, spiritual, and global changes." From I Said! Records. More info: www.keythlawrence.com. —TC

Jen Rathbun Coffee, Chocolate & Men



New jazz artist Jen Rathbun has released her latest CD, of which music critic Lucky Boyd said was "quite possibly the sexiest album ever recorded." The local gay-friendly singer has been compared to Rosemary Clooney, Billie Holiday, and Bette Midler, with a dose of humor and double-entendre. You can add to that a tantalizing voice that ranges from suggestive and playful to sultry and soulful. From Platinum Plus Records (www.platinumplusrecords.com). More info: www.jenrathbun.com. —SL

Nils Landgren Funk Unit Funky Abba



Swedish trombonist and vocalist Nils Landgren, who recorded with Abba in 1979, is a funkster at heart. And with the blessing of one of Abba's primary songwriters, Benny Andersson, Landgren's Funk Unit re-imagined a dozen of the group's songs. The Funk Unit entirely rearranged the pop songs to the point that they are fresh new creations, but they kept the sound pure and organic by using real drums, horns, guitars, bass, and keyboards just like funk records were

made in the '70s. Andersson makes a special appearance on piano on "When All Is Said and Done," the poignant closing ballad. From Justin Time Records (www.justin-time.com). More info: ACT Music (www.actmusic.com). —TC

Shania Twain Greatest Hits



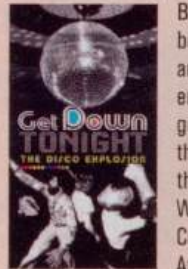
This first compilation of greatest hits includes every big hit from Shania's career. The long-awaited 21-song collection includes three new songs along with love ballads and high-energy chart-toppers. Her music isn't straight country; it's infectious and irresistibly catchy. From Mercury Records (www.mercuryrecords.com). Info: www.shaniatwain.com. —Andrea Rodricks

Maggie Kim Lesson 1.5



I don't know what Lesson 1 might be, but I can tell you what Lesson 1.5 is: If you like looking at girls, open the booklet of this CD—Maggie Kim is a bonafide centerfold! If you don't like looking at girls, though (for you guys at 6 [exclusively homosexual] on the Kinsey scale), well, you still might like her sticky sweet approach to danceable pop songs. Just maybe. Self-released (www.maggiekim.com). —Lance Scott Walker

Various Artists Get Down Tonight: The Disco Explosion



Boogie down with this three-CD box set of the biggest, sexiest, and grooviest songs from the disco era. Each CD is built around a geographical theme, revealing that there was indeed depth to the disco movement—from the West Coast to the Midwest, East Coast, and South and across the Atlantic. The track listing boasts songs by a host of popular disco-era artists like the Village People, ABBA, Rick James, Donna Summer, Gloria Gaynor, and Lipps, Inc. From Shout! Factory (www.shoutfactory.com). —AR

Jem Finally Woken



This Welsh singer/songwriter has turned out a lot of work in her short career, due in no small part to her nomadic existence and an ambitious approach which has included dipping her fingers into all corners of the industry. She treats her songs the same way—lots of layers in her arrangements with lots of really well-scripted strings, and ample room for her to explore her beautiful, almost husky voice. Some parts will even remind you of Christmas. Perfect timing. From ATO Records (www.atorecords.com). More info: www.jem-music.net. —LSW →

GrooveOut

continued from page 67

Ruvolo and drummer Davey Houle, re-embraces its hard-rocking origins and burns through a series of blistering tunes, including "Always If Only," "Night Striped Assassins," "The Assimilationist," and "Mosquito Heart Serenade." If you need further proof, The Atari Star even does a cover of Shellac's "Copper." Still, traces of The Atari Star of old can be heard on the album's six-and-a-quarter-minute centerpiece, "Asphalt Everest," which includes a lovely trumpet part by Jamal Ayoub.

As with The Atari Star, an audible stylistic shift has also occurred with **June Panic**. The born-again queer that we first



came in contact with on 2002's *Baby's Breadth* is still rocking his unique brand of experimental music on *Hope You Fail Better* (Secretly Canadian).

Gay Bay Area singer/songwriter **John Ashfield** won me over with his tasty *Harmony Bunny* disc a few years ago. In his latest incarnation, as a member of **The Bobbleheads**, he has even included some of his previously released tunes on *Automatic Fun*, such as "Crush," "I Don't Know," and "Why Not Smile" (a song about Joni Mitchell). The remaining songs are bright and sunny power pop tunes that have the ability to light up a room or even an entire day.

"Hyperdelic acid house innovators" **Psychic TV**, led by transgender artist and performer **Genesis Breyer P-Orridge** (a founding member of industrial music pioneers Throbbing Gristle) have created a trippy musical tribute to the late Brian Jones (of the Rolling Stones) on the double disc set *Godstar: Thee Director's Cut* by **Psychic TV** (Voiceprint). Separated into "Reel One" and "Reel Two" discs, sure to leave the listener reeling, the set includes numerous Psychic TV originals (emphasis on originality), as well as covers of songs by the Stones, the Beach Boys, and Serge Gainsbourg.

ON THE WEB:

Read more Gregg Shapiro recommendations at www.outsmartmagazine.com.

Gregg Shapiro is a past recipient of the annual OutMusic award that recognizes involvement by non-musicians in furthering the work of GLBT performers.

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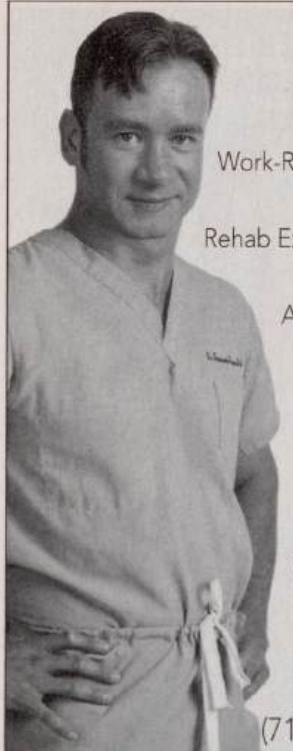
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GrooveOut Shorts continued from page 68

Linda Ronstadt *Hummin' to Myself*



Linda Ronstadt has had a spectacular career spanning diverse genres. The new album from this Grammy-winning vocalist is a beautiful recording of standards in an intimate jazz setting. Ronstadt chose popular favorites and rare gems from the mid-20th century. With an extraordinary voice, she performs such unforgettable melodies as "Cry Me a River" and "I'll Be Seeing You." From Verve Records (www.verve-records.com). —AR

Zap Mama *Ancestry in Progress*



It's not just the appearance of Philadelphia stalwarts Erykah Badu and ?uestlove (The Roots) that have changed the sound of this Grammy-nominated world music artist; the majority of it was actually recorded in Philly. Marie Daulne's smoky voice and brilliant arrangements are at their peak, and who better to help you climb to the top than those who are already on their way there themselves? From David Byrne's label, Luaka Bop (www.luakabop.com). More info: www.v2records.com. —LSW

Dave Isaacs *Flying*



A classically trained guitarist with an affinity for old-time mandolin, the stomp and groove of swamp blues, the electric energy of classic guitar rock, and the lithe phrasing of flamenco and gypsy swing, Dave Isaacs' kaleidoscope of influences swirl together into an instantly accessible style that defies easy categorization. From Shadow Brook Records. More info: www.daveisaacs.com. —TC

DVD Goldfrapp *Wonderful Electric—Live in London DVD*



For a band that has continued to reinvent themselves with each album (almost beyond the point of recognition), this DVD offers a unique snapshot into their development with a pair of live shows in London from right around the time *Black Cherry* was released. Proof—in case you were wondering—that they don't just make that magic in the studio. From Mute (www.mute.com). —LSW

Read more GrooveOut Shorts at
www.outsmartmagazine.com.

Holiday Listening

Danny Wright *An Intimate Christmas*



After several successful independent releases, Fort Worth-born piano man Danny Wright makes his major-label debut with this CD of holiday chestnuts and four original compositions. The music is soothing seasonal fare—and a bit Wyndham Hill, which may or may not be a good thing, depending on your fondness for that style. The best original work is the tender "My Son's Lullaby," which in the liner notes Wright dedicates to his two boys, Hayden and Hudson, who live in Dallas with him and his partner, Ed Huckfeldt (also executive producer of the CD). From Atlantic Records/Atco. More info: www.atlantic-records.com, www.dannywright.com. —TB

Various Artists *Broadway's Greatest Gifts: Carols for a Cure Vol. 6*



This double CD with 23 tracks is a must for Broadway fans. *Carols*, which features original recordings of new and traditional holiday carols, offers recordings by casts who have never recorded together. This year's CD includes "Hello, Christmas," written especially for *Carols* by Oscar-nominated husband and wife team Michael McKean and Annette O'Toole, who are joined by the cast of *Hairspray*. (McKean recently replaced Harvey Fierstein in *Hairspray*.) Benefits Broadway Cares/Equity Fights AIDS

(www.broadwaycares.org). From Rock-it Science Records (www.rocket-itscience.com). —TC

Various Artists *Essential Holiday Classics*



From Columbia: The Manhattan Transfer (*The Christmas Album*) and Andy Williams (*The Andy Williams Christmas Album*); from Columbia/Legacy: Ray Conniff (*Here We Come A-Caroling*), Frank Sinatra (*Christmas Songs by Sinatra*), and Andy Williams (*Merry Christmas*). All standard stuff, except for The Manhattan Transfer, which includes a choir of boy sopranos, street bands and chimes, and Tony Bennett. More info: www.columbiarecords.com, www.legacyrecordings.com. —SL

Houston Symphony *Glad Tidings*



The symphony commissioned the charming title piece, a musical version of the Nativity story, from Texas composer Randol Alan Bass, whose work is regularly performed by the Turtle Creek Chorale, the gay men's choir in Dallas. George Bush, father of the gay-bashing W, narrates. Oh, the ironies. Additional tracks on the new CD include another Bass composition, "A Feast of Carols." Michael Karjewski conducts. From Houston Symphony Media Productions. More info: www.houstonsymphony.org. —TB ■

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GO, TEAM

A collaboration results in two novels this year, one set in Houston

We first met Timothy Lambert and Becky Cochrane upon publication of the novel *He's the One*, which they had written under the pseudonym Timothy James Beck with two other members of a four-person writing team ("Author! Author?" February 2003 *OutSmart*). This month, Kensington releases *I'm Your Man*, the next in the TJB romantic-comedy series, which began with *It Had to Be You* and continues the tale of gay ad exec Blaine Dunhill.

"*I'm Your Man* is the third in the Eau Claire to Manhattan series," Cochrane says. "At the beginning of the new century, Blaine is facing challenges with his romance, his career, and a request for sperm from his close friend, Gretchen."

As you might guess, the TJB collective writes page-turning romps, which are also quite funny.

"I think it's my favorite book in the series, so far," Lambert says. "But, then again, I think I say that every time."

Lambert and Cochrane live in Houston. He, in fact, resides in the apartment behind the Montrose house she shares with husband Tom. "So we live together, but we don't," Lambert says. "But we all share meals together, watch *The Young & the Restless* together, play board games and cards together. And, of course, Becky and I spend a lot of time together working. We're just like



Booked up: Becky Cochrane (l) and Timothy Lambert, photographed in their home in Montrose, had two books published in 2004 and are completing two for 2005.

every other family in America." He smiles.

They and the other two members of the Beck quartet—Jim Carter of Long Beach and Timothy Forry of New York—communicate via the Internet and occasional face-to-face meetings. They are working on a fourth book in their series, with a planned 2005 publication date.

Earlier this year, Lambert and Cochrane released *The Deal*, a novel under their own names published by Alyson. She explains: "*The Deal* is a romantic comedy about a year in the life of five friends who met in college and are now 30: three gay men, two of whom had a college romance that ended badly, one

lesbian, and one straight man. In their quest to hunt love without killing it, they discover surprising new things about themselves and one another."

The pair of authors, who have collaborated since 1998 and obviously spend a great deal of time writing, are working on a second joint novel, also due out next year from Alyson. *Three Fortunes in One Cookie* concerns a young gay artist who leaves Manhattan to return to his Mississippi Gulf Coast home and his eccentric ("a euphemism for neurotic," Lambert says) family.

Lambert also has a short story, "The End of the Show," in the collection *Best Gay Love Stories 2005*, published next month by Alyson.

In December, Lambert and Cochrane will read from *I'm Your Man* and *The Deal* at Hollywood Book & Café. The date had not been determined by press time; updated information can be found at www.timothyjamesbeck.com and www.timothyjamesbeck.com. All four TJB writers plan to convene in January for a reading here.

"It amazes me," Lambert says of their success. "Sometimes I think someone's going to come along and take it away from us. Like it's a nutty dream. I never went to college, I never took writing classes, but I'm writing with my friends, and our books are being published. And people seem to enjoy them. How great is that?"

The Last Song of Dusk
Siddharth Dhanvant Shanghvi
Arcade Publishing (www.arcadepub.com)



Written in Technicolor, with all the sights and smells of India, *The Last Song of Dusk* is a witty and achingly sad book by a talented young debut novelist, Siddharth Dhanvant Shanghvi. The colorful characters steal your heart and transport you to a magical world. The book reads like a carnival ride—it's about colonization, love, karma, tragedy, and the strength of the human spirit. Shanghvi sets up a fairy tale that includes a wicked stepmother-in-law and eccentric friends with bohemian lifestyles, and then shatters the happily-ever-after ideal. • Set in colonial India, the book follows the fortunes of a young woman, Anuradha, whose fabled beauty is such that peacocks line up to bid her farewell as she journeys to meet her groom, Vardhmaan, a doctor who is so hand-

some that women feign illness to have him examine them. Their love for each other is transparent, but is love ever enough to absorb the pain of losing a child? They live in an old house by the sea where an Englishman died of a broken heart, waiting for his princely Indian lover to leave his wife and family and come to him. He left behind "a formidable stack of love letters written and never posted, tied with jute, smelling of lavender and sadness." Anuradha's bittersweet story intertwines with that of her cousin Nandini, a seductive orphan with a dark heart and an extraordinary gift for painting. Nandini appears in their lives with her scandalous mini-sari shaking up Bombay's social scene. Anuradha and Vardhmaan's world, on the other hand, has grown increasingly silent with a lingering fragrance of heartbreak and loss. Will Anuradha finally come to terms with what her mother told her when she first set out to meet Vardhmaan?—"In this life, my darling, there is no mercy." Shanghvi is a tremendously talented debut novelist with a gift for stunning prose and storytelling. *The Last Song of Dusk* is a refreshingly original tale of fate, love and tragedy; a magical piece of storytelling that pirouettes between laughter and heartbreak. —Andrea Rodricks

This Is Delicious! What Is It?

Robert Meyers-Lussier

iUniverse, Inc. (www.iuniverse.com)



At first glance, the cover of *This Is Delicious! What Is It?*—with its yellow cover, black text, and picture of a smiling kitty—could be mistaken for a copy of *Cats for Dummies*. But openly gay chef Robert Meyers-Lussier has no offerings in this international comfort food cookbook to tickle Morris's whiskers. What he does put forward is a thorough look at the dishes that make people around the world undo that first button of their pants and pat their tummy to express contentment. Having this book in your kitchen is like having highlights from countless cookbooks representing many cultures in a single collection. He also offers plenty of insight and back stories of the first times he made these recipes or how they saved the day at a catered affair. • Let everyone else entertain this December with ham. Throw your get-together with a menu as eclectic as yourself and the friends you have drawn together. Take your guests on a belly-bulging trip across the globe. Start out by setting the table with an amuse-bouche like Mid-Eastern hummus and pita. Then offer Lomi Lomi Salmon, a savory Hawaiian hors d'oeuvre. Warm their palates with feijoada, a famed Brazilian black bean soup. Move on to an entrée of Greek moussaka. The preparation looks daunting, but the payoff is worth it. Follow up with a simple Italian salad of grilled portobellos and goat cheese with Earl Grey vinaigrette. End the adventure with a whimsical Vietnamese banana soup. Sure, after six courses they won't move for a while, but your guests will remember your table long after they forget the turkey and sweet-potato pie of someone else's unimagined gathering. —Eric A.T. Dieckman ■

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ReadOut Shorts

Hot Target

Suzanne Brockmann

Ballantine Books (www.randomhouse.com/BB)



Suzanne Brockmann is a prolific writer of over 40 mainstream romance fiction novels. This book is special: It was written as a love letter to her young gay son. In the dedication, she admires his courage and admonishes the homophobic. The book itself attempts to do the same things with a mix of gay, straight and undecided characters. Sometimes it works, and sometimes it doesn't. As a mainstream work, a real plot is more important than ripped bodices. In fact, no one's manhood gets pressed until Chapter Six. The plot really is riveting, with unpredictable twists, turns, and thrills along the way. But for a book that's driven by dialogue, much of it doesn't

ring true. The words that gay FBI agent Jules and is-he-or-isn't-he-gay antagonist Robin say to each other would never be spoken by real human beings. One exception: Jules' coming-out story. You can feel the heartfelt connection between this and the author's real-life family story. Overall, the characters are engaging, but not very complex. The main romance between bodyguard Cosmo and beleaguered film producer Mercedes is touching but predictable. You really have to work on your suspension of disbelief as Cosmo and the other hired guns explore their feelings. The anti-homophobia rhetoric gets downright preachy at times, but more power to it if it can help turn public opinion around in these days of out-of-control conservatism. The most intriguing subplot involves the production of a movie that outs a beloved war hero and the moves to protect its integrity. There's no denying that this book is a good old-fashioned page-turner, and sometimes that's all a reader is in the mood for. If you're ever in such a mood, *Hot Target* is worth a try. Available December 28. More info: www.suzannebrockmann.com.

—Joe Milano

MATTRESS MATTERS

Sally and wife can't marry, but they can buy a new bed

Wifey and I wanted a new president. Instead we'll get a bigger bed. With 11 states banning our freedom to marry, we figure we might as well sprawl while we can still get away with it. I expected to feel safer at home under a new leadership, but for now I'll have to console myself with the freedom to roll around in bed without falling off.

Despite lack of progress in government, Sweetie and I keep right on advancing into middle age. We find ourselves beset with odd requirements and sleeping habits that, like our political leaders, don't make any sense. Take Wifey's inexplicable need to position herself on the diagonal (no idea why—magnetic north?) and my recent penchant for stretching my legs out over the edge (what gives?). Is it so wrong to yearn to recline fully and be fully supported by a mattress, free from spousal overcrowding? The way

we sleep now, we're one of the few American families who are actually making ends meet.

A bigger bed is a values-based decision. I value my right to a good night's sleep. Until our democracy is restored I won't rest easy, but at least we can expand our bed. Unlike

I expected to feel safer at home under a new leadership, but for now I'll have to console myself with the freedom to roll around in bed without falling off.

the dismal prospect of four more years, our small-bed days are nearly over. I'm blue about the elections, but I'm more optimistic than ever that Wifey and I can actually achieve nocturnal comfort. I'm feeling hopeful, and I intend to keep hope alive.

Yes, my fellow Americans, a bigger bed means freedom to slumber deeply. To totally

catch the big Z's worry free. Safe and restful without Sominex. Sound sleep is the new American dream.

As long as we're dreaming, I'm dreaming big—as in king size. Not that cuddling up in a double bed is all bad. Sweetie and I even manage in a twin for a night when we have to, employing the handy entwine-and-cling method. But I long for the freedom to flop my limbs without injuring the one I love. I've outgrown small and uncomfortable beds. I paid my dues on bargain foam pads and austere futons. I've done my time on the couch when I'm too middle-of-the-night cranky to work out a peace accord. I'm ready for cushier times.

Being good lesbians, we're processing all the issues. What will changing bed size mean to us? A bigger bed will narrow the aisle to the bathroom—and increase the incidence of night stumbling en route. New

king-sized sheets will require re-choreographing our sheet-folding dance. We'll have to find a taker for our smaller bedding hand-me-downs. We'll need to shop for narrower nightstands—and bring sex toy measurements to the furniture store to ensure adequate drawer space. I can see why folks prefer the incumbent. Change is scary.

Then there's the troubling name. Whose idea was it to make a *king* bigger than a *queen*? It's not like that in real life. Queen RuPaul in heels towers over even the butchiest drag king boi. Queen Latifah dwarfs King Tut. What does it say about a supposed democracy that we name our mattresses after royalty? And whose idea was it to put kings at the top of the hierarchy?

Wifey and I have decided that as beds go, biggest is best. Now we have to shop for the darned thing. We can't really know the character of a mattress without checking for ourselves. We worry that a Bush-appointed Supreme Court might not defend our inalienable mattress-sampling rights. Who will protect our freedom to simulate actual real-life bed-use in the sleep shop? Can we lie diagonally? Bounce on all fours? Exactly how thoroughly can two big dykes test drive a mattress before we're hauled off to some mattress-less Guantanamo?

Bed diversity is overwhelming. There are so many choices. Plush, ultra plush, pillowtop, or plush pillowtop padding? Soft, firm, extra firm, or ultra firm? And so many brands. We won't even consider the high-end memory foam bed. The way things are with domestic security, with just our luck, Bush will have homeland security smoke out the Tempur-Pedics and discover what private nighttime activities the memory foam actually remembers. They have their ways.

How will we know which mattress is right for us? Which will really support us over the long haul? Can we have them debate each other? Mattress selection isn't just a case of choosing the lesser of evils. All king-sized beds are not the same.

But this is the land of the free and the home of the brave. Wifey and I are proud, bold Americans ready to take on the awesome responsibility of choosing our own bed, even if our choice for president was mangled by some Diebold voting machine.

Four years from now this country had better elect a progressive, LGBTQ-friendly, pro-choice, anti-war, environmentally aware, peace-promoting, globally conscious regime. We'll all sleep better.

Writer Sally Sheklow and her constitutionally banned wife share a bed in Eugene, Oregon.

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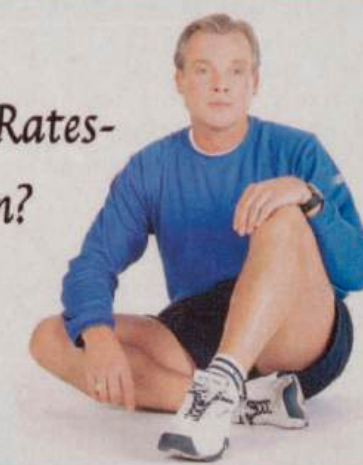
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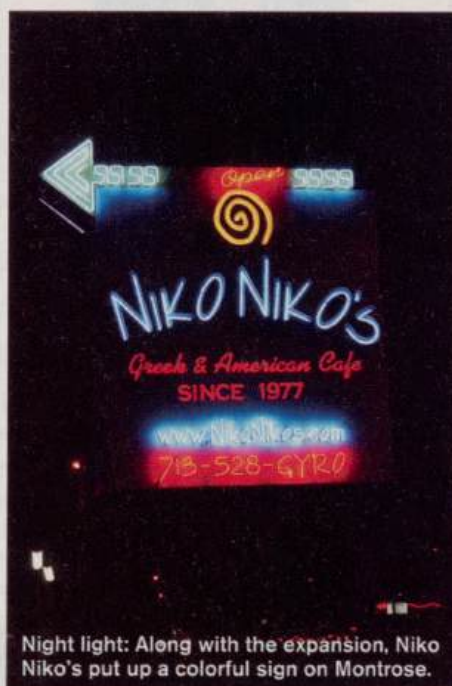


GREATER GREEK

Montrose standard Niko Niko's gets an upgrade

The fact that Niko Niko's has thrived for nearly 25 years with extremely limited parking (the bane of many a local business) testifies to the popularity of its food. Until the recent completion of a 4,200-square-foot expansion, the restaurant even managed to cool diners with sputtering window units, nearly unheard of in this subtropical clime (just wait until May, then give thanks). Now in addition to central air, Niko Niko's has 30 parking spaces. That's more like Houston.

The Greek fare needed no improvement. The gyro—chopped lamb and beef sauced with creamy Tzatziki sauce and wrapped in pita bread—is still classic. Albert, my spouse, prefers a more Americanized specialty, the Philly cheese steak sandwich—a high-fat choice oozing



Night light: Along with the expansion, Niko Niko's put up a colorful sign on Montrose.

lots of the yellow stuff. I still crave the seafood dishes like my favorite lemony grilled trout.

Of course, one of the chief attractions remains broad, cheery Dimitrios Fetokakis, Nikos Niko's owner, whose big grin and jaunty banter needs no renovation.

On December 4, Houston writer George Molho will sign copies of his new memoir, *Greek Coffee*, at Niko Niko's. Every customer who buys a copy of the book will get a free cup of java from the new coffee bar. In addition, diners who bring a nonperishable food item for the Star of Hope will receive 20 percent off their tab.

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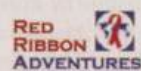
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Out of Town

by David Eduardo Flores Perez

Just look at this ... !

Me and Soraya were going to go cross-country ! But we'd have to go thru some of the "banned" states !!!

I know, giiiiirl ! ain't it a shame ???



I wonder what the weather is like in Canada...



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Calendar of Events

Deadline for OutSmart's January issue is 5 p.m., Saturday, December 11.

DECEMBER

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; Q, 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; EJ'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:** EJ'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.*

6 & 7 (Mon. & Tues.)

Jazz-Anime. Young Japanese pianist Hiromi has taken cues from her men-

tors Ahmad Jamal, Oscar Peterson, and Chick Corea and performs uninhibitedly, defying categorization. Join the sprightly Hiromi with her cartoon-like hair, Tony Grey on bass, and Martin Valihora on drums as they play their big energy in support of her new CD, *Brain*. \$30. 7:30 pm at The Menil Collection, 1515 Sul Ross. Tickets and info: 713/524-5050 or www.dacamera.com.

6, 13, 20, 27 (Mon.)

Manhattan Style. Iconoclasts of the downtown NYC scene discuss the intersection of underground art and music in the '70s and '80s in this documentary series. **December 6:** noise rockers Thurston Moore and Kim Gordon of Sonic Youth; **December 13:** Alan Vega; **December 20:** Genesis P. Orridge; **December 27:** the ever whimsical Laurie Anderson. 9 pm at Dean's Credit Clothing, 316 Main near Preston. For info/times: 713/868-2101 or www.aurora-pictureshow.org.

11 & 12 (Sat. & Sun.)

Cinema Silliness. If John Waters was in town this weekend, he could be found right here. Elizabeth and Paul Nelson curate Cinema Bomar; an AV Geeks-style 16 mm film fete. Of the educational, industrial, and ephemeral titles there's Kathy, Mike, and Alcohol, *Safety in the Slaughterhouse*, and a bonus screening determined by the presidential election results. 8 pm Saturday and 3 pm Sun-

day at Aurora Picture Show, 800 Aurora, the Heights. For info: 713/868-2101 or www.aurorapictureshow.org.

16 (Thu.)

Free HIV/AIDS Legal Clinic. Need legal advice? It's on the house. Consider it a gift for the holidays. The clinic cannot, however, assist with fee-generating issues, criminal issues, or immigration. Bring a copy of ID, proof of all available income into the household, proof of residency, and proof of HIV+ status. Noon-3 pm at Saint Hope Foundation, 5800 W. Loop S., Ste. 560. Schedule an appointment: Tom at 713/228-0735 ext. 121.

PERFORMING ARTS

◆ **Arthropod Animal: Insecta.** Amy Eli's choreography incorporates strongly physical movement, video projections, and a large wall with hand/foot holds for climbing. With a name like *Insecta*, are we in store for a Kafka-esque transformation of dancer into creepy-crawly? 8 pm, Dec. 16-18 at DiverseWorks, 1117 East Fwy. For info: 713/223-8346 or www.diverseworks.org.

◆ **Bash.** In a series of soliloquies, Neil LaBute's *Bash* tells the story of four ordinary people who, through extraordinary circumstances, have experienced a fall from grace comparable to that of figures in Greek tragedy. There's the hard-edged

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—SAT., DEC. 11.**

businessman who offers up his daughter to his career; the sunny, all-American young couple who commit a shocking, spontaneous act of violence; and the eerily composed young lady whose love for her son is sacrificed to an even greater passion. Dec. 3-19. Location/tickets/info: www.theatre-collide.com.

◆ **A Fertile Holiday** is Radio Music Theatre's 20th annual performance of the comedically down and out Fertle family of Dumpster, Texas. A legion of well-developed characters are portrayed by a mere three actors. \$18. Thru Jan. 15 at Radio Music Theatre, 2623 Colquitt. Tickets/info: 713/522-7722.

◆ **Singin' in the Rain.** Even without Gene Kelly, the adaptation of this outstanding musical is the tops. Get out your umbrella. In the stage version of the title song, it really rains. \$27-\$72. Dec. 2-19 at the Hobby Center, 800 Bagby. Tick-

ets: 713/558-8887, 888/558-8887, or www.tuts.com.

◆ **The Spitfire Grill.** This is the regional premiere of the musical version of the independent film of the same name. Percy is released from prison with no friends or family or prospects. She decides the town of Gilead should be her new home, basing her decision on nothing more than a picture from a travel magazine. She begins her search for the America she wants to believe in but cannot find. Thru Jan. 9 at Stages, 3201 Allen Pkwy. For tickets/more info: 713/527-0220 or www.stagestheater.com.

◆ **The Tale of the Allergist's Wife.** The hilarious story by Charles Busch (*Psycho Beach Party*) of a New York "culture vulture" on the verge of a nervous breakdown. Plunged into a midlife crisis by the death of her therapist, Marjorie is shaken out of her lethargy by the reappearance of a fascinating and mysterious childhood friend, taking her entire family into an emotional tailspin. Thru Dec. 12. 8 pm Fridays and Saturdays, 5 pm Sunday, at Theater LaB Houston, 1706 Alamo, off the 2100 block of Houston Ave. For tickets: 713/868-7516 or www.theaterlabhouston.com.

◆ **You Can't Take It With You.** The Pulitzer Prize-winning comedy by Moss Hart and George S. Kaufman pits the eccentric Sycamore family against the opulent and stodgy Kirby family. When the two families face each other, the love between Alice Sycamore and Tony Kirby is jeopardized. \$14 (students \$10, seniors \$12). 8 pm Fridays and Saturdays. Thru Dec. 18 at the Company OnStage, 536 Westbury Square. For tickets/more info: 713/726-1219.

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

◆ **Dead Sea Scrolls.** Hidden for almost 2,000 years in remote caves in the Judean desert, The Dead Sea Scrolls are regarded as the greatest archeological find of the 20th century. Rarely seen outside of Jerusalem, these scrolls include some of the earliest surviving textual records of the books of the Hebrew Bible, known to Christians as the Old Testament. \$17 for adults, \$15.50 seniors, \$9 for children 2-11. Thru Jan. 2 at the Houston Museum of Natural Science, One Hermann Circle Drive. For tickets/info: 713/639-4629 or www.hmns.org.

◆ **Erika Blumenfeld: Inconstant Moon.** Blumenfeld creates unique images with a modified antique camera which she uses to commit light and color to light-sensitive paper. Her work can be described as somewhere between obsessive and reductive. Go to the exhibit with ideas on hand; her mail art project will result in 500 recordings based solely on audience specifications. Thru Jan. 15 at DiverseWorks, 1117 East Fwy. Info: 713/223-8346 or www.diverseworks.org.

◆ **Perspectives 144: Amalgama.** Collaborative works are the focus in this participatory exhibit. Artists include the Otabenga Jones collective, Rachel Cook, and Selven O'Keefe Jarmon. Thru Jan. 23 at the Contemporary Arts Museum Houston, 5216 Montrose Blvd. For info: 713/284-8250 or www.camh.org.

◆ **Perspectives@25.** The CAM celebrates its 25th with an exhibit of 77 major international artists who received exposure at the museum early in their careers or had their first Houston solo show here. Look

continued on page 84

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THE BEAT GOES ON

Allen Ginsberg's Howl experiences revival and reinterpretation

Allen Ginsberg and his beat compatriots spent the '50s setting the stage for the revolution of the '60s. Ginsberg wrote poetry that challenged practically every institution of American life, encouraged the counter culture to emerge from the fray, and made no secret of or apologies for his homosexuality, all in a post World War II environment barely any time after Dr. Alfred Kinsey published his book on male sexuality.

To say he was bold is a bold understatement. To say his epic poem, *Howl*, gave a voice to a generation merely touches on the subject. When artist/UCLA professor Allen Ruppersberg discovered most of his students were unfamiliar with the poem written in the mid-50s, he took it upon himself to reintroduce the younger generation to the poem that speaks to every young generation. *The Singing Posters* were born, translating the verse into various phonetic spellings and reintegrating them into the original text. Ruppersberg's version is an installation of about 200 vibrant billboards, hanging from floor to ceiling.

Also part of his installation is his book, *Haul or Wave Goodbye to Grandma*, where each page of the text of *Howl* is superimposed over various images, symbolizing how Ginsberg's work is a direct influence on Ruppersberg's. —Eric A.T. Dieckman

THE SINGING POSTERS
POETRY SOUND COLLAGE
SCULPTURE BOOK
ALLEN GINSBERG'S HOWL
by ALLEN RUPPERSBERG
THE VITAL LINE 2003

What: *The Singing Posters*
When: Through December 12
Where: Rice Gallery, Rice University,
Sewall Hall, Entrance 1 off Main St. at Sunset
Cost: Free
Info: 713/348-6069 or www.ricegallery.org

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HOLIDAY HAPPENINGS IN HOUSTON AND GALVESTON

With the red and green, wassail-flavored heart of the season upon us, how can we get into the spirit of it all without filling up on candy canes? It's looking like Ben & Jerry's will give us another year without any pints of flavorsome Festivus ice cream to add zing to the holidays, so what can we do to spice up our gingerbread? Here's a stocking full of happenings around town to make your December happenin'.

LISTED BY DATE:

• Thru Dec. 18

Rudolph Rides Again. Ms. Claus' fave elf, Alvin, has been left behind in Houston. Rudolph steps out of retirement to help Santa find his li'l buddy. In H-Town, adventure abounds and the true meaning of Christmas awaits. \$7. The Company OnStage, 536 Westbury Square. Tickets/more info: 713/726-1219 or www.companyonstage.org.

• Thru Dec. 23

A Laura Ingalls Wilder Christmas. The Ingalls rediscover their love of family and the joy of the holiday season in this story by Laurie Brooks. A.D. Players Grace Theater, 2710 W. Alabama. Tickets: 713/526-2721 or www.adplayers.org.

• Thru Dec. 24

Santa and the Snowman. The famed Christmas animation becomes larger than life, thanks to IMAX. The Houston Museum of Natural Science, One Hermann Circle Drive, 713/639-4629.

• Thru Dec. 26

Holiday Lights in Hermann Park. Artistic light displays accent the natural beauty of the park as a different local choral group performs each evening. Family-oriented and free to the public, this festival runs Friday-Sunday. Info: 713/524-5876.

• Thru Dec. 26

The Nutcracker. Sugarplum fairies and dancing mice, the kids are enchanted by stunning visuals and entrancing music. You know how it goes. Houston Ballet's timeless production of the classic holiday tale runs at the Wortham Theater, 500 Texas at Smith. Info: 713/523-6300 or www.houstonballet.org.

• Thru Dec. 26

A Christmas Carol. A classic retelling of a classic tale. What more need be written? \$37-\$54. 7:30 pm, matinees at 2:30 pm (Spanish translation Sunday, Dec. 12, 2:30 & 7:30 pm; captioning, ASL interpretation and audio description Sunday, Dec. 26, 2:30 pm), at The Alley's Hubbard Stage, 615 Texas Ave. Tickets/info: 713/228-8421 or www.alleytheatre.org.

• Thru Dec. 31

It's Traders Village for Me. The behemoth flea market hosts its Annual Christmas Holiday Market all December. The flea circus becomes a wonderland of shopping, free music, festive foods, and pictures with jolly old Saint Nick. Weekends, at 7979 N. Eldridge Rd. Info: 281/890-5500 or www.tradersvillage.com.

• Thru Dec. 31

O Little Town of Bagels, Teacakes, and Hamburger Buns. Back by popular demand, this story finds the regulars of a coffee shop in Palestine, Texas, taken aback by the unfamiliar faces of some newcomers. If you know anything about Palestine, Texas,

you know how easy it is for newcomers to shake things up and feel out of place and unwelcome. A.D. Players Grace Theater, 2710 W. Alabama. Tickets: 713/526-2721 or www.adplayers.org.

• Thru Dec. 31

A Pure Gospel Christmas. The Ensemble Theatre fills the holidays with soul in this Houston premiere from off-Broadway featuring a score of gospel music and holiday favorites. The Ensemble Theatre, 3535 Main St. Tickets: 713/520-0055.

• Thru Jan. 2

Festival of Lights. One of the largest presentations of Christmas lights in Southeast Texas, guests journey through Moody Gardens to Santa's Workshop, a gingerbread house, the Nativity, and many more places reminiscent of the holiday season. Moody Gardens, Galveston. Info: 800/582-4673.

• Thru Jan. 9

Get Multicultural This Season! The Children's Museum of Houston presents Festivals of Light, spotlighting eight religious and cultural celebrations. Step into a world of diya lamps, menorahs, Christmas lights, crowns of candles, Chinese lanterns, luminarias, kinaras, and the glimmer of the crescent moon while celebrating Diwali, Ramadan, Santa Lucia, Hanukkah, Las Posadas, Christmas, Kwanzaa, and the Chinese New Year. At the Children's Museum of Houston, 1500 Binz St. Info: 713/522-1138 or www.cmhouston.org.

• Thru Jan. 17

Get Yer Skate On. Strap on your ice-cutters and experience the largest seasonal outdoor ice-skating rink in the southwest U.S. The Woodlands Town Center, 10001 Woodloch Forest Dr. Info: 281/363-2447 or www.town-center.com.

• Dec. 5-19

The Little Prince. In this opera based on Saint-Exupéry's novel, a little gentleman is dismissed as a meddling child by all the adults he meets. Foolish grown-ups. No one is wiser than the little prince. Wortham Center's Cullen Theater, 500 Texas St. at Smith. Info: 713/546-0230 or www.houstongrandopera.org.

• Dec. 7 & 14

Christmas Mass and Gloria. Charpentier's *Mass* and Vivaldi's *Gloria* highlight Mercury Baroque's contribution to the season. Tuesday, Dec. 7 (3:30 pm at The Centrum in Spring, 6823 Cypresswood) and 14 (7:30 pm at Zilkha Hall, 800 Bagby). Tickets/more info: 713/315-2525 or www.Mercurybaroque.org.

• Dec. 7-12

Fiesta Navideña. The Alley Theatre and M.E.C.A. (Multicultural Education and Counseling through the Arts) offer an assorted array of performances for young theater audiences including a new version of *Pancho Claus*, a 23-year-old Houston holiday tradition starring Richard

Reyes featuring new music composed by Houston native Rodney Alejandro and performances by the *Pancho Claus Hip Hop/Break Dancers*. Also part of Fiesta Navideña is *Pastorela Groovy*, a hilarious version of the classical Latin American holiday legend of good overcoming evil in the arrival of the divine child. \$5. Alley Theatre, 615 Texas. Tickets: 713/228-8421 or www.alleytheatre.org.

• Dec. 9-11

The Heritage Society's 42nd Annual Holiday Candlelight Tour in the Park. The historic homes clustered in downtown's Sam Houston Park open their doors every evening to display centuries-old seasonal decorations.

S&M XMAS



X-rated Xmas (top to bottom): Paul Drake, Anne Zimmerman, Jennifer Decker, and Bob Morgan

Sadomasochistic Xmas. dos chicas the ater commune presents the return of Bob Morgan's story of safe, consensual domination, submission, humiliation, and torture. Really, this is the core of every holiday get-together, except it's usually not consensual. Even after 15 years of marriage, Susan and Steve still enjoy a peppery sex life. Their one gift every Christmas is to pass their zeal on to another couple. This year's benefactors: the exceptionally vanilla Beth and Bill. Beth learns to lose her wintry frigidity while Bill tastes the whip and kisses the boot of shiny, shiny leather.

What: Sadomasochistic Xmas
When: 8 p.m., Dec. 3, 4, 7, 10, 11, 14, 17, 18
Where: Upstairs at Helios, 411 Westheimer (at Taft)
Cost: \$10 (\$8 seniors/students)
Reservations: 832/283-0858, dcommune@yahoo.com or www.geocities.com/dcommune

Costumed carolers transport revelers back in time to celebrate the season. For more info: 713/655-1912 or www.heritagesociety.org.

• Dec. 9, 11, & 12

A Very Merry Pops. The Houston Symphony brings back a beloved Christmas tradition. Over 300 musicians, singers, dancers, and performers create this holiday spectacle of magnificent proportions. Jones Hall, 615 Louisiana. Tickets/more info: 713/224-7575 or www.houstonsymphony.org.

• Dec. 10

An Evening of Songs and Arias. Bering Omega Community Services benefits from this evening of beautiful music including the world premiere of a new composition by Christopher Theofanidis and William Hoffman. Zilkha Hall, 800 Bagby. More info: 713/529-6071 or www.beringomega.org.

• Dec. 10-11 & 17-18

The George Ranch Historical Park rings in the holidays 1830s-style with a traditional Texas meal, wagon rides, caroling, campfires, and tours. 10215 FM 762, Richmond. For more info: 281/343-0218 or www.georgeranch.org.

• Dec. 11

Christmas Boat Lane Parade. More than 100 beautifully lit and extravagantly decorated boats travel leisurely through the lake and up Clear Creek Channel to Galveston Bay. More info: 281/334-9880.

• Dec. 11-19

The Christmas Revels 2004. This Scottish celebration of the winter solstice honors the achievements of the different clans through tales, song, and dance. \$22-\$30 for adults, \$11-\$15 for children. Saturdays (2:30 & 7:30 pm) and Sundays (1 pm), Moores Opera House, The University of Houston, Cullen Boulevard, Exit 16. Tickets or more info: 713/668-3303 and 713/669-9528.

• Dec. 14-19

A Tuna Christmas. What's a holiday without tuna? Join the kooky, out-of-touch Tuna, Texas characters at The Grand 1894 Opera House, 2020 Postoffice. Tickets or more info: 409/765-1894, 800/821-1894, or www.thegrand.com.

• Dec. 15

Miracle on 34th Street. The movie that became an American Christmas tradition pairs with another holiday tradition, Toys for Tots. Tickets are not for sale. Rather, donate a new, unwrapped toy as early as 2 pm the day of the show in exchange to see Maureen O'Hara and Natalie Wood learn the true meaning of Christmas, or at least meet the real Santa Claus. Toys will be sent directly to Toys for Tots. 7:30 pm at Landmark's River Oaks Theatre, 2009 West Gray. Info: 713/528-4608 or www.toysfortots.org.

• Dec. 17-19

Handel's Messiah. One of the most highly esteemed choral works ever written, celebrates the life of Christ with arias and choruses ranging from the timeless *Hallelujah Chorus* to the *Great Amen*. Performed by the Houston Symphony, Jones Hall, 615 Louisiana. Info: 713/224-7575 or www.houstonsymphony.org. ■



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DECEMBER

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New Year's Galveston Blast - 31st & 1st

JANUARY/FEBRUARY

"Red, White, & Divas" starring Jerry Atwood, Marsha Carlton
& Sharon Montgomery, Balinese Room, Fri. Jan. 8TH
MARDI GRAS GALVESTON - January 28th - February 5th

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Calendar

continued from page 81

out for the works of Jenny Holzer, Roy Lichtenstein, Laurie Anderson, and Philip Glass. Thru Jan. 9 at the Contemporary Arts Museum Houston, 5216 Montrose Blvd. For info: 713/284-8250 or www.camh.org

♦ **Richard Stout—2004 Art League Houston Texas Artist of the Year.** Art League Houston celebrates the 2004 Texas Artist of the Year Richard Stout with an exhibition of the artist's work spanning his 40-plus-year career. Stout has participated in multiple solo and group exhibitions in Texas, across the U.S., and abroad. Free. Through Dec. 30 at Heritage Hall, JP Morgan Chase Building, North Lobby, 707 Travis. Info: www.artleaguehouston.org/tx_artist/about.html

♦ **Small Paintings.** Do your walls look a little incomplete? Maybe you want to buy an original work of art for a friend, partner, or relative but don't want to give them anything too intimidating. This is your show. Ranging in style from abstract to realistic, there's something for every taste. Dec. 11-Jan. 7 at the Watercolor Art Society Houston, 1601 W. Alabama. For info: 713/942-9966 or www.watercolorhouston.org

♦ **Tibet: Treasures from the Roof of the World.** Stunning examples of Tibetan sculpture, paintings and textiles, ritual Buddhist objects, and beautifully crafted pieces made for Tibetan nobility are featured in the Houston premiere of this exhibit. Adults \$12.50, children (3-11) \$5. Through Jan. 9 at Houston Museum of Natural Science. For more info: 713/639-4629 or www.hmns.org

♦ **Trio of Photographic Exhibits.** Identifying Marks: Contemporary Portraits, Randy West: Pretty, and Linda Walsh: Northern Light fill the Houston Center for Photography. The first exhibit is a collaboration of fine art photos from around the country and Europe. Included is Albert J. Winn, whose black and white self-portraits depict his life as a gay Jewish man living with HIV. West's abstracts focus on color, line, and nuance. Walsh's color environmental series explores light and dark and time's effect on both. Through Dec. 19 at the Houston Center for Photography, 1441 W. Alabama. For info: 713/529-4755 or www.hcponline.org

♦ **Yale Street Arts & Flower Market** is a Heights market created for local artists to display and sell their original works of art. Fresh-cut flowers are also available. Entertainment is provided by local musicians and is a highlight throughout the day. The market is free & open to the public from 9 am-5 pm and continues the first Saturday of each month, coinciding with the Heights 1st Saturday events. The market is located behind Kaplan's Ben-Hur at 210 West 21st Street just off Yale. Free parking is available in the Kaplan's parking lot. Info or booth rental: Mitch Cohen at 713/802-1213 or visit www.YaleStreetMarket.com

♦ **Yuken Teruya: Notice Forest.** Using bags from drive-thru restaurants and other discarded containers, Teruya develops intricate shadow boxes. Her imagery alludes to the depletion of natural resources and the co-opting and disintegration of cultural heritages. Through Jan. 15 at DiverseWorks, 1117 East Fwy. Info: 713/223-8346 or www.diverseworks.org

CALENDAR DEADLINE

for OutSmart's
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Saturday, December 11, 5 p.m.

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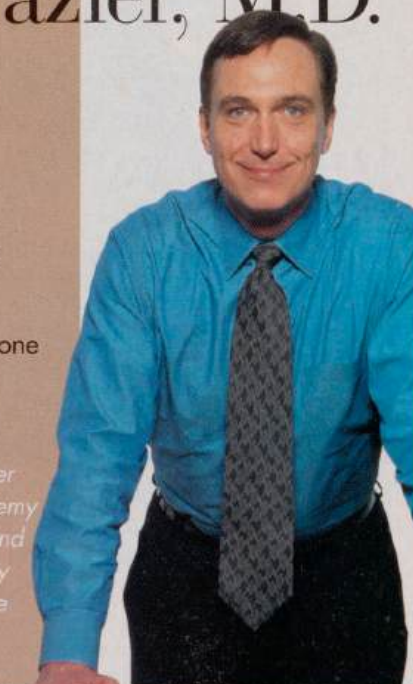
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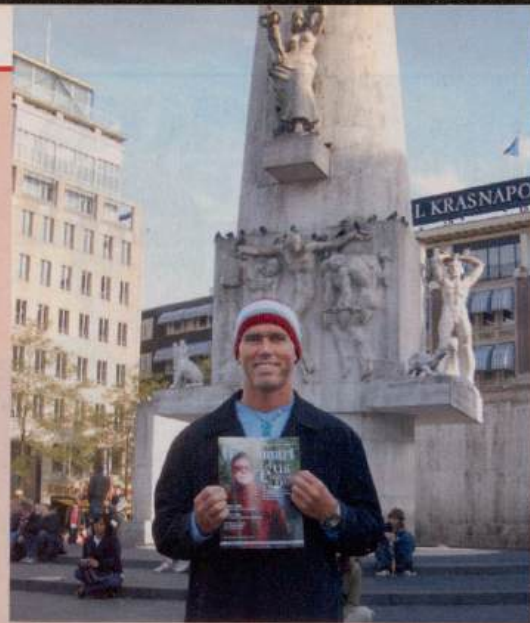
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Time Out with OutSMART

SPECIAL PROMOTIONS AND ADVERTISING

WINNERS

Individuals and businesses honored in OutSMART's Gayest & Greatest reader poll attended the October 27 reception at South Beach. Steven Chrisenberry and Carlos Reyes of don Carlos Catering provided the food.



Rebecca Perez (l) of Keller Williams Realty with Laura Siller.



Rob Schmerler (l) and Jeffrey Bules of Rob Schmerler Insurance Agency.

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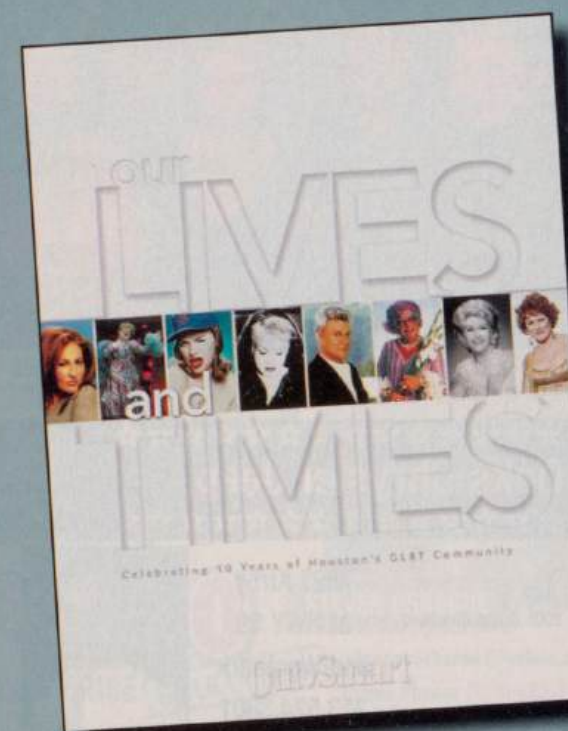
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BAR & CLUB GUIDE

HOUSTON

BARTINI

This brand-new, two-level club near the Westheimer curve features talent night on Thursday and a Saturday variety show. House DJs include Alex T and Marquee Marc, and MCs include Cookie La Cook. 1318 Westheimer • 713/526-2271.

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 piano bar recently moved to a Montrose location. Popular entertainer Jerry Ahwood performs every Saturday night. 2312 Crockett • 713/665-9678 • www.houstongaybars.com.

BRICKS II

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

CABO MONTROSE

This restaurant near the Westheimer-Montrose epicenter now has a weekly GLBT Night on Tuesdays directed at diners in the community, featuring drink specials. 1111 Westheimer • 713/942-2226.

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 Thursdays. Women-fronted bands perform every Saturday night. 1100 Westheimer • 713/523-7217 • www.chancesbar.com.

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.

COUSIN'S

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



BEHIND THE BAR

WHO: Jerome Downey
WHERE: Robert's LaFite (2501 Ave. Q, 409/765-9092)

WHAT'S UP: Greet Downey, named one of the favorite male island bartenders in our Gayest & Greatest poll, on December 4, when LaFite hosts a benefit for Krewe of Oz.

THOMAS GIELENA

JR's/SANTA FE

The features of this Montrose standard include pool tables, go-go boys, and karaoke. Kafi, named best drag queen in the 2004 Gayest & Greatest OutSmart reader poll, hosts popular shows Wednesday thru Sunday. 808 Pacific • 713/521-2519.

MELA'S

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

METEOR

Weekly evenings at this chic Montrose video bar include Musical Theatre Night on Monday, Drag Queen Bingo on Tuesday, and Professional Women's Happy Hour on the first and third Wednesday. 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 HOUSTON

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

PRIVÉ

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

RAINBOW ROOM

Every Thursday, Heather Moon hosts Karaoke Night at this north Houston club. DJ Kenny supplies music on Friday and Saturday. The club has begun presenting live music. 527 Barren Springs • 281/872-0215 • www.therainbowroombar.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.theripcord.com.

611 CLUB

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 potent EAW Avalon Series Sound System keeps the shirtless boys dancing the night away. 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.

TOYZ

Thursday night means the long-running Papi Chulo amateur strip show, emceed by Monique Johnson with DJ Alex T providing house, hip hop, and Latin music. Cookie La Cook hosts her show on Fridays. 5322 Glenmont • 713/666-4892.

UNION BAR & LOUNGE

This swank club in Montrose now hosts Girlie Action on the first Friday of the month, hosted by DJ Gracie Chavez and featuring guest female DJs. 202 Tuam • 713/529-5296 • www.unionbarandlounge.com.

VIVIANA'S

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

XCAPE

Lyrica Andrews hosts Luscious Ladies. Nite on Wednesdays, featuring female go-go dancers and no cover for gals. On Fridays and Saturdays, there is no cover all night. 8101 Airport Blvd. • 713/454-0775.

NOTE: Club Big Yo has closed. The downtown club Pearl has changed ownership and no longer hosts a weekly gay night.

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

GARZA'S KON TIKI

OutSmart readers voted this Strand spot the best club for dancing in the latest Gayest & Greatest poll. On Friday, Saturday, and Sunday nights, the club hosts popular drag shows with the Muscle Action dancers. 315 Tremont • 409/765-5805 • www.thekontiki.com.

ROBERT'S LAFITTE

A real neighborhood bar, this Island Institution attracts a colorful crowd of regulars and travelers. The verdant, redone private patio of the club, located only two blocks from the Gulf, now includes a swimming pool. 2501 Ave Q (at 25th) • 409/765-9092.

3RD COAST

OutSmart readers voted this Seawall spot the island bar with the best happy hour in the Gayest & Greatest survey. The wall of windows offers a great Gulf view. 904 Avenue M • 409/765-6911 • www.3rdcoastbar.com.

THE TREMONT HOUSE

Smart island visitors stop by the atrium bar in the Strand district hotel to hear Oma Galloway play. From our July 2003 issue: "Galloway doesn't merely tickle the ivories. He performs." 2300 Ship's Mechanic Row • 409/763-0300.

UNDERCURRENT

In the Gayest & Greatest poll, OutSmart readers voted this Seawall club the best spot to see male dancers. DJ Neil provides music for Aqua Lounge on Thursday night. 3102 Seawall Blvd. • 409/760-8571.

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.

CHRIS' CROCKETT STREET PUB

This club (formerly just Crockett Stree Pub) has new owners, Chris and Sybil, and a slightly new name. Free pool and Man Watch on Saturday night are just some of the features here. 497 Crockett • 409/835-4243 • www.GayBeaumont.com.

HOOLIGAN'S

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

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Prospero Año Nuevo

artwork by: slcay@earthlink.net

by Lilly Roddy

We start this month with Mercury retrograde. This would be a great time to revisit old issues and take a look back at our lives. It is best not to travel, especially to new places, during this time. Fortunately, for the holiday time, Mercury is back direct on the 21st. That should make it easier going home or having the relatives visit you. • The New Moon is on the 11th in Sagittarius. That is a day of truth and being open. Be careful, people are likely to be accident-prone. The Full Moon is on the 26th in Cancer. This will heighten emotions, especially those connected to family conditions. This may make time with the family edgy. Make sure you have an exit strategy. • The Sun enters Capricorn, the Winter Solstice, on December 21 at 7:42 a.m. Mercury begins the month retro in Sagittarius and ends the month direct in Sagittarius. Venus is slipping through Scorpio and is fired up as she enters Sagittarius on the 16th. Mars is at home in Scorpio until the 25th when he joins Venus in Sagittarius on the 25th. All the rest of the planets are happy in the signs they are in, and no changes are expected.

ARIES (March 21–April 19). This is a good holiday time for you. You are ready to travel and see people you haven't seen in a while. You are open to new experiences even with Mercury retrograde. You can handle almost any crisis with flair. Relationships are better than ever. If you are single, this is a great time to be out looking. Career aspects are rather tough, and you are making sure that you are happy with your future track. At the end of the month, career takes the focus in your life. You may want to change where you are or even start your own business.

TAURUS (April 20–May 20). Relationships are a bit edgy as the month starts. If there are problems that have been brewing, they will come to the surface. Career decisions are still not clear, and commitment to any direction seems illusive. Things will change next March for you. You may find that you want to spend more time by yourself this month and avoid crowds. It may help you to make an appearance for the holidays even if you don't stay long.

GEMINI (May 21–June 21). Relationships are highlighted this month. You certainly don't want to be alone. And if you are not getting the attention from your partner, you will be sending out signals that you are not attached even if you are. If you don't address this directly, you could create dramas that bring you into a negative encounter with your partner. Career directions need to be updated, or you will be extremely bored by the end of the month. Watch what you say to your boss or clients. They will take it personally.



CAPRICORN (December 22–January 19). This time of the year brings out your desire for calmness and harmony with the world around you. And you will do your best to avoid conflicts. There are plenty of career opportunities on the horizon, but you are not ready to commit to anything during December. Relationships are still in a period of being reworked. You want what you have to work, but you will have to see progress or you will be looking elsewhere. You will feel more grounded as your birth-day time rolls around.

CANCER (June 22–July 22). Organizing your life and work schedule is on your mind as the month opens. You don't have much time for play, and even play has to have some goal associated with it. This is a good time to get things in order, but not a great time to plan ahead for next year. You will have to wait until after the 21st to do that. Health plans are renewed at the end of the month. And your focus shifts to relationships at that time.

LEO (July 23–August 22). You are in a playful mood as the month opens. And you are usually in a good mood for the holidays anyway. Be sure to spend your time with people who are as playful and creative as you. You are not in a work mode. Family may be a bit irritating to be around until after the 21st. Relationships continue the theme of "just beyond the next curve." Keep your expectations very, very realistic. By the end of the month, you are still in a playful mood, but work has your attention.

VIRGO (August 23–September 22). Tensions are strong around family activities as December opens. It may be best to save the real celebrating till the end of the month when most of this has passed. Mercury retro is spending the month in the family sector. Expect to hear from the family because they will need something from you. Watch your spending this month and next month. It will be easy for you to overspend and justify what you want to buy. Relationships need to be fun and easy. Too much responsibility or pressure will have you running in the opposite direction.

LIBRA (September 23–October 23). Generally, this is a good time for you with Jupiter, the great

benefic, in your sign until next October. This promotes good feelings and a sense of optimism about all projects that you start. But you have a good sense of what you can do and what you can't do. Career decisions are weighty this month and even heavier next month. You don't have time for foolishness. Since you are the sign of relationships, they are always important to you. But you are not as easygoing as normal and may avoid entanglements until next year.

SCORPIO (October 24–November 21). As the month begins, Mars, your alternative ruler, is making his way through your sign. You are enigmatically magnetic and seductively powerful. You are certainly not someone to be taken lightly as the month proceeds. Keep a handle on your money. You are ready to spend at the drop of a name. Career shifts are right around the corner for you. Next year is a time of important decisions about where you are going. Family matters are mushy, and relationships are doing well.

SAGITTARIUS (November 22–December 21). This is your birthday month, and with Mercury retrograding through your sign, this is a very intro-spective time for you. Don't be surprised to find yourself very nostalgic. You will really want to be with family or old friends during this holiday time. Some of you are considering a major career change, but you won't be sure until the end of January. You are also not sure if you are happy in your relationship. You are just not sure about you. Look for some clarity by the end of the month.

AQUARIUS (January 20–February 18). This is a very social time for the Aquarians. You are really ready for the holiday spirit and get-togethers. You are ready to take some risks at work, but your timing may be a bit off. Wait until January to take that big step. Those of you born February 1 through the 6th are not in step with the rest of your fellow Aquarians. You are in more of a loner time and are avoiding the holiday crowds. You are not lonely. You just want to be alone.

PISCES (February 19–March 20). You are really thinking about your past and your future simultaneously. You are wondering what you are doing with your career and if you are truly happy. Mercury is retrograding through your career sector, bringing up issues that you have so far been successful in avoiding. This can cause problems with clients or bosses. And you don't have much tolerance for any of this. And you may be a bit more edgy as the month comes to an end. Relationships can work at this time, but you have to feel unencumbered by them.

A professional astrologer for 20 years, Lilly Roddy counsels individuals and teaches classes. Her website is www.lillyroddy.com.

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OUT IN HOUSTON

1 Rob Arcos (l) and boyfriend Ricardo Garza attended the Sept. 9 Houston Gay & Lesbian Film Festival opening-night party at Landmark River Oaks.

2 On Sept. 12, GLOBO president Abel Rodriguez (l) presented one of two college scholarships to Christina Arizmendez at an event at Meteor celebrating Hispanic Heritage Month. Victoria Mendoza also received a scholarship from Gays & Lesbians Organized by Orgullo.

3 On Tuesday nights, the Empire of the Royal Sovereign & Imperial Court of the Single Star hosts Drag Queen Bingo at Meteor. In December, the weekly events will benefit The Assistance Fund medication program, Montrose Clinic women's program, & PAWS Houston. The crowd at a recent bingo night included Jeff Hartstein (r) and Hellyn Bedd (Bob Skinner).

4 The lovelies at the Sept. 18 Miss Camp America event at 1415 Bar & Grille included (l-r) Marilyn (John Parson) and Ireaka Phish (Jason Sechrest). Donations from the evening benefited four organizations including The Assistance Fund.

5 Judy Shepherd, mother of Matthew Shepherd, spoke at the University of Houston on Oct. 19. The Graduate School of Social Work hosted her lecture.

6 The crowd at the Aug. 11 Erotic Trunk Show at Sippora Gallery included (l-r) model Daniel Gerber, Erotic Cabaret owner Bonnie Wills, artist Salli Babbitt (who helped curate the Aug. 13 Erotic Show) and Sippora owner Amy Meyers. Proceeds from the two nights benefited breast cancer research at M.D. Anderson.

7 At the Houston Voice 30th anniversary party on Oct. 15 at Meteor, Richard Lapin (c), Mayor Bill White's deputy chief of staff, presented editor Binnie Fisher (l) and general manager Jason Wilson with a proclamation honoring the newspaper.

8 On Sept. 12, Christian music star Cynthia Clawson (c) performed in concert at Bering Memorial United Methodist Church. She posed afterward with Alan York (l) and Jeff Henry.

9 Human Rights Campaign political director Winnie Stachelberg (c) posed with Carlyn Klemm (l) of the HRC National Board of Governors and Klemm's partner, Cari Clark, at a September 23 event at the Hilton Americas.



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