

Outsmart

Houston's magazine

APRIL 2005
www.outsmartmagazine.com

ALAN CUMMING OUT

The bi star talks about *Reefer Madness* ("Everyone's offended equally"), Bush, and his new fragrance called—what else?—Cumming

- **PAGE TO STAGE** Playwright Lanford Wilson chats about life in the theater
- **SPLASH BACK** The big spring party turns 10
- **ON THE INSIDE** Six spies report from Focus on the Family's conference
- **LIFE OR METH** Crystal kills
- **HOME BUYER'S GUIDE**

Alan Cumming

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About the cover:
Alan Cumming from the new film *Reefer Madness*, debuting April 16 on Showtime. Photo by Paul Michaud. Design: Blase DiStefano

Pilie'

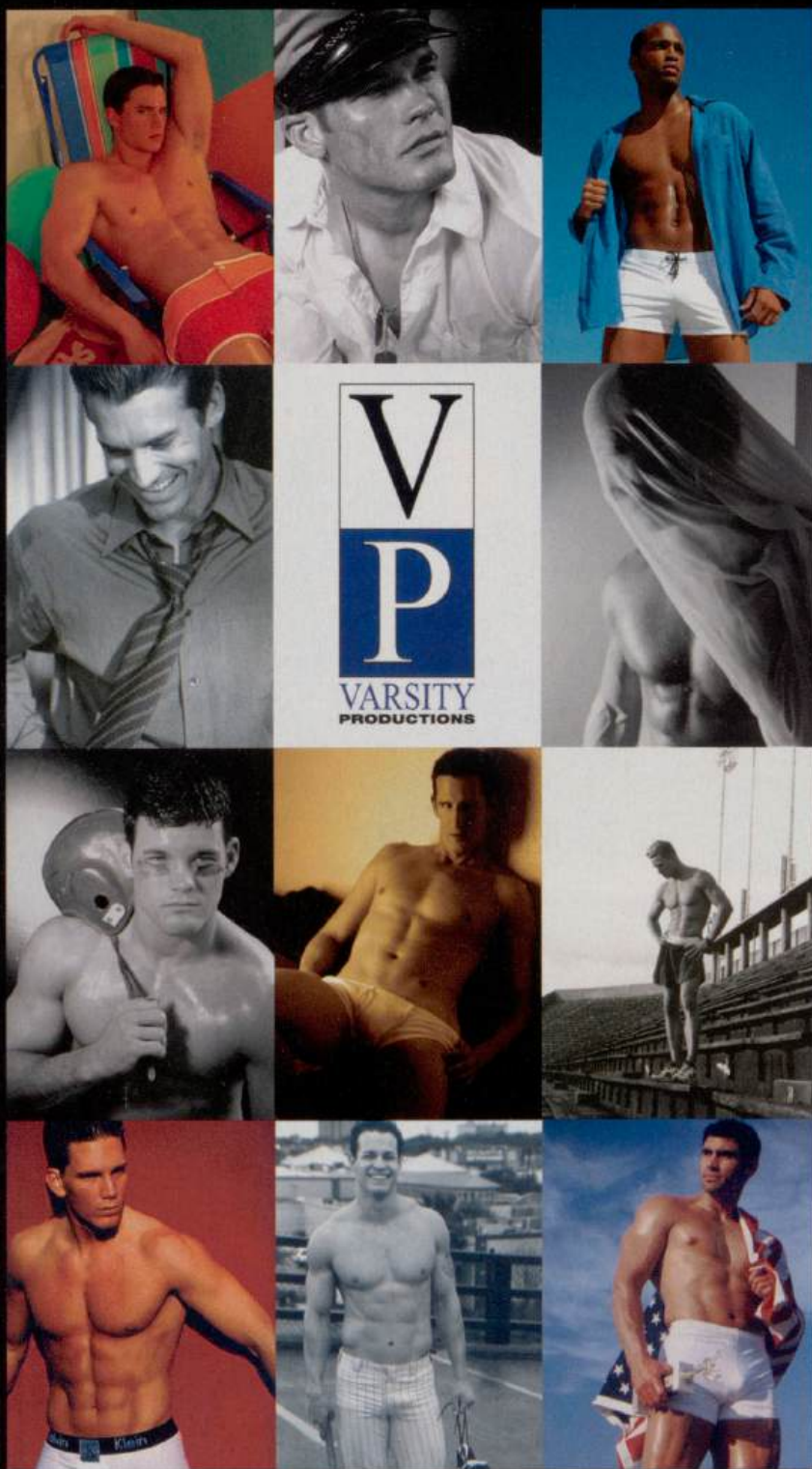
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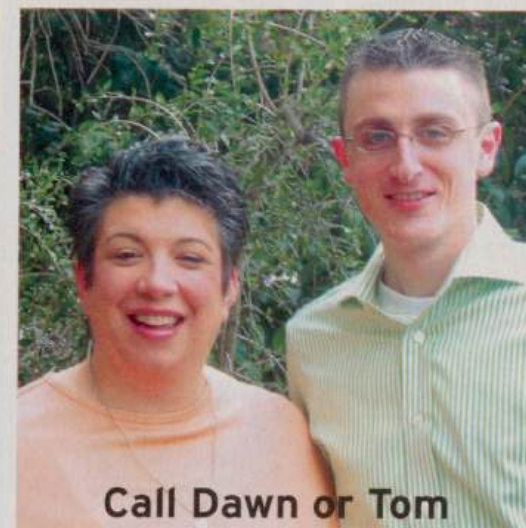
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Letters

NOTE FROM AN OLD FRIEND

Hello from Austin, Texas.

Irv Smith was my boss in Houston in the 1980s, and I met his wife and his daughter Amy. I don't recall knowing the Smiths had a son, so I was quite surprised to find this article [OutSmart, June 2002]. It is heartwarming to learn that they have continued to love and support their son and others through PFLAG.

This article reminded me that one of the engineers in our department once stated to me that AIDS was nothing any of us would ever have to worry about. At that time I was concerned about the possibility AIDS could spread to the heterosexual community and, of course, was concerned about the loss of life in the gay community. Now I find out that this dreaded disease touched the lives of the Smiths through the death of Paul's friend.

My stepdaughter and her husband work with gay and lesbian youths in San Antonio. They are both teachers in San Antonio schools.

I hope you don't mind my commenting, but I couldn't resist.

Daphne Miller
Austin

EDITOR'S NOTE: Sarah Richards interviewed Irv and Jane Smith for the June 2002 OutSmart. The Smiths were honorary grand marshals for the Pride parade that year.

PERRY BAD

I hope that all of your readers who voted Perry Homes to be an admirable builder read the current issue of the Houston Press [February 24, 2005]. Perry continues to rape and pillage Houston, and now it looks like he is spreading his shadow around the state. He certainly has spread the money around.

James Myrick
Katy

EDITOR'S NOTE: OutSmart readers selected Perry Homes best homebuilder in the Gayest & Greatest poll ["The Votes Are In," October 2004].

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. 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 community resource guide will appear soon at www.outsmartmagazine.com.

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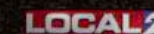
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CARRYING A TORCH. Patrick McIlvain plays a big part in the Houston Senior Olympics this month. He has been picked to run with the torch in the April 1 opening ceremonies, and on April 10 he competes in three events—the 5- and 10-kilometer road races and the 1500-meter run—at the Rice University track and field stadium. In 2004, he captured gold in the 10K in his age group, a victory that will propel him in June to the biennial Summer National Senior Games in Pittsburgh. The local games, coordinated by the Jewish Community Center of Houston, are qualifiers for the Texas Senior Olympics in October and the next national games in 2007. When he runs, McIlvain wears a shirt promoting his cause, the Depression and Bipolar Support Alliance.

Photographed by Yvonne Feece




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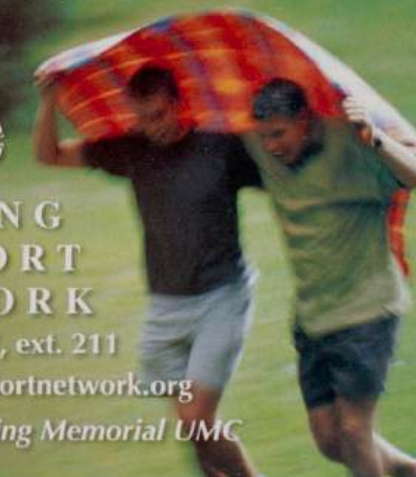


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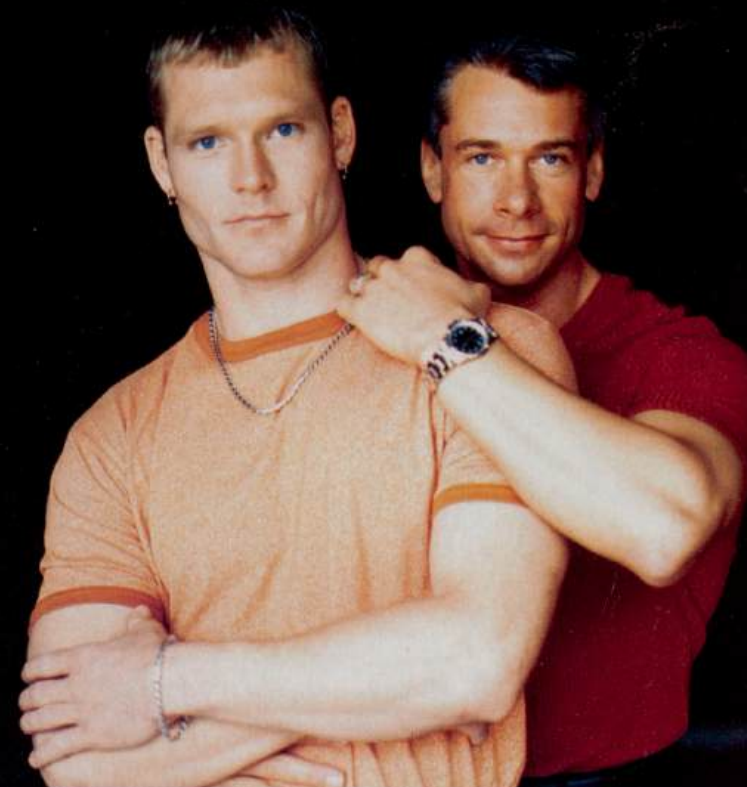
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FAMILY MATTERS. On April 30, Brandi Williams and daughter Rebecca Williams, a University of Texas sophomore photojournalism major, will participate in a panel discussion on the children of transgenders at the International Foundation for Gender Education Conference in Austin. Williams, a Houston Transgender Unity Committee board member and a Pride parade grand marshal nominee this year, and Rebecca are just two of the local activists participating in the April 26-30 conference. Jane Ellen Fairfax will lead the children's panel. Therapist Denise O'Doherty will present a workshop on crossdressing in marriage. Phyllis Randolph Frye will give the opening plenary address and present two sessions. Both Williams women will also attend the Transgender Unity Banquet on April 16.

Photographed by Kelly Catchings



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DATEBOOK

Montrose Counseling Center offers a 12-week support group for women with HIV on Monday, 6-7:30 p.m. Info: Cheryl Siard, LCSW, 713/529-0037, ext. 315.

Marisol Rodriguez of state senator Rodney Ellis's staff speaks about GLBT-related legislative issues at the **Houston Gay and Lesbian Political Caucus** general meeting on April 6, 7 p.m., at Houston GLBT Community Center. Info: 713/521-1000, www.hglpc.org.

Conversations at the Center for AIDS presents the panel discussion "HIV, Nutrition, and Weight—What You Need to Know" on April 6, 6-8 p.m. RSVP: Bernie Vasquez, 713/527-8219, Bernie@centerforaids.org.

University of Houston-Downtown **Graduate Theatre Student Association** presents *Falsettos* April 14-19 in the O'Kane Theatre. \$8, \$6. Reservations: 713/432-7710, GTSAHouston@aol.com.

May 1 is the next planning meeting for the **Conference on Houston's LGBT Future**, 3 p.m., at Houston GLBT Community Center. Info: 713/524-3818, www.houstonglbtcommunitycenter.org.

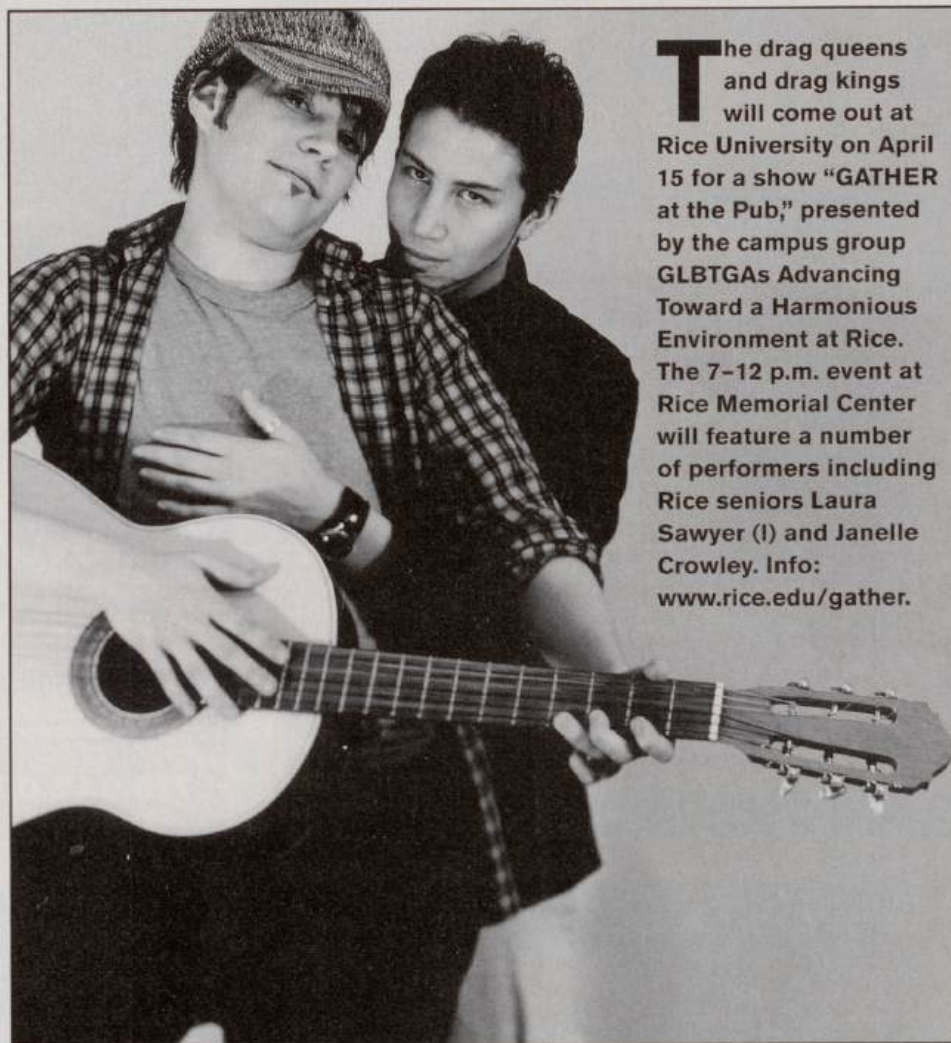
The new Bering Support Network **Sex Love Addicts Anonymous** group meets Wednesday, 7 p.m., at Bering Memorial United Methodist Church, Room 224. Info: Ken W., 713/943-8561, ken@alumaphoto-plateco.com, or Grace Z., 713/269-4353, grace.zaragoza@tatsdirect.com.

May 5 is postmark deadline for the **GLOBO 2005 Educational Scholarships**. Applications for the Gays and Lesbians Organized by Orgullo program are available at the Houston GLBT Community Center, among various locations. Info: 713/710-0268.

Joe Watts presents his **The Group (Theatre Workshop)** on Monday, 7 p.m., in the Grace Lutheran Church fellowship hall. \$5. Info: 713/522-2204.

Houston Professional Women's Happy Hour convenes the first and third Wednesday, beginning 7 p.m., at Meteor. Info: carol.wyatt@nuasis.com.

The new **Galveston Professional Women's Happy Hour** meets at Mod Coffee & Tea House on the second Thursday, 7-10 p.m. Info: iluvvpie@yahoo.com.



The drag queens and drag kings will come out at Rice University on April 15 for a show "GATHER at the Pub," presented by the campus group GLBTGAs Advancing Toward a Harmonious Environment at Rice. The 7-12 p.m. event at Rice Memorial Center will feature a number of performers including Rice seniors Laura Sawyer (l) and Janelle Crowley. Info: www.rice.edu/gather.

GAY COMEDY JAMS HOUSTON

Gay stand-up comedian Scott Kennedy (pictured) brings his Gay Comedy Jam to town on April 7 as part of the first Houston Comedy Festival. Fellow comic Bob Smith joins Kennedy for the Laff Stop show. The April 1-10

comedy festival includes 20 events at various local venues, culminating in the finals of a citywide comic competition at the Hobby Center. Some proceeds benefit United Cerebral Palsy. Details: www.houstoncomedyfestival.com.



Scott Kennedy

SEMINAR OFFERS GLBT MONEY TIPS

George W. Hawkins and Christopher Laasko, financial planners with AXA Advisors, LLC, will present a free seminar on financial planning for GLBT individuals and families, on April 30, 8:30

a.m.-12:30 p.m. Attorney Debra Hunt and certified public accountant Janet Langham will also participate in the event. Reservations: 713/402-6409.

More News Briefs →

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growth, finding themselves in the same counter-productive cycles, but unable to come up with a new approach, not knowing what to do to progress to the next stage of personal fulfillment.

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PROGRESSIVE DINNER RETURNS APR. 30

After the event was canceled last year, the annual Progressive Dinner benefit returns on April 30, hosted by AssistHers and Uncommon Legacy Houston. The planners include (l-r) Kris McGarvey, Elizabeth McClane, Sandy Clough, and Sydnee White. For the event, guests will travel by bus to four residences for

a meal. Proceeds will benefit both organizations. AssistHers provides in-home care for lesbians with chronic or disabling illnesses. Uncommon Legacy

supports the lesbian community through academic scholarships and grants. Tickets: 713/521-4628, www.assisthers.org.



YVONNE FELICE

CAMP HELPS CAMP

On April 10, Depila Debris (below) will present a fundraising show for the spring LVL PWA Campout. The Debris Debacle, 5 p.m. at Mary's, will also star Depila's sibling performers, the Debris Sisters. Her alter ego, Joel Icenhower, is a long-time volunteer with the biannual campouts for gay men living with HIV/AIDS, established by the late Lady Victoria Lust (Marvin Davis). The next campout is April 15-17 at Buzzard's Peak, 30 miles southeast of Temple. Info: John Szewczyk, campout coordinator, 713/529-6615, tex4ever@hotmail.com.



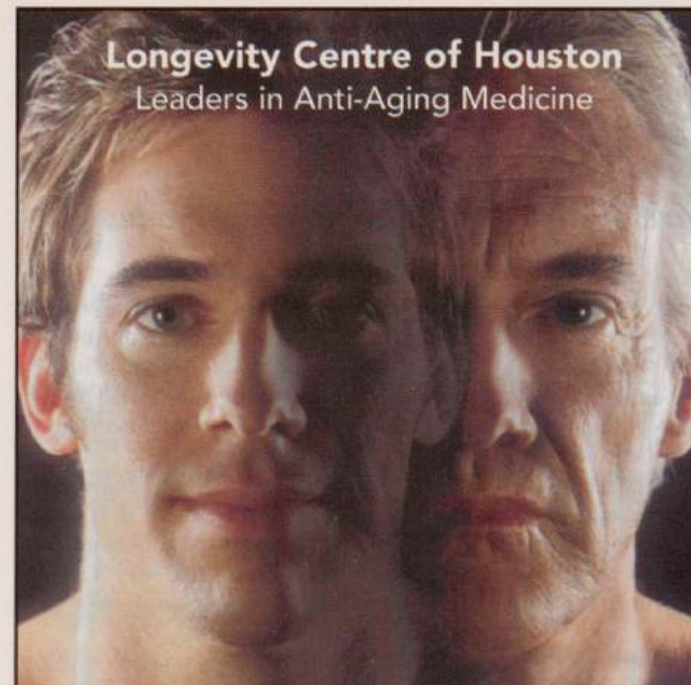
COURTESY JOEL ICENHOWER

BANNED SINGERS HIT HOUSTON

Jason and deMarco, the openly gay singing duo recently banned from a Singapore concert, will perform on April 17 as part of the Bering Memorial United Methodist Church AprilFest. In addition to the 7 p.m. concert, the annual spring Bering events will include an April 8 and 9 rummage sale and the popular pancake breakfast and carnival on April 30.

In March, the Singapore government denied a request by a gay Christian group to hold an AIDS charity concert on April 3, asserting that the planned performance of Jason and deMarco, who sing spiritual pop, would flout the public interest because they celebrate a "gay lifestyle," according to a government spokesperson.

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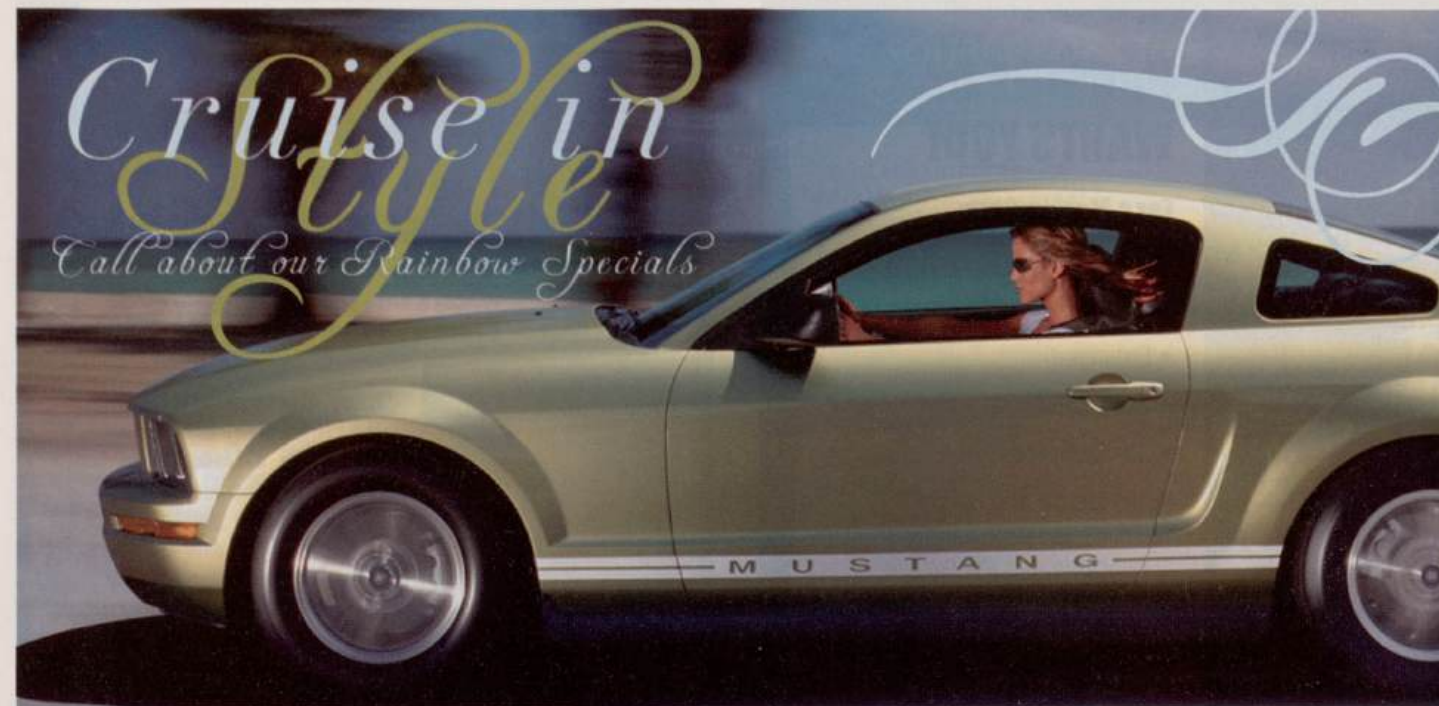
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LIFE LESSON

For Congress and the president, the "culture of life" doesn't apply to everyone

When is the last time anyone can remember Congress working overtime on Palm Sunday to pass a piece of legislation? Or, when is the last time anyone can remember George W. Bush cutting a Crawford-ranch vacation short to get back to Washington to sign a piece of legislation late on a Sunday night? How about never!

What happened to engage the Congress and the president to act so unusually? Terri Schiavo is what happened. The woman who has been in a persistent vegetative state (according to her doctors) since 1990 was about to be allowed to die. After 15 years, more than a dozen state-court decisions, the intervention of Jeb Bush and the Florida legislature, and an unsuccessful attempt by the U.S. Congress to subpoena Mrs. Schiavo to appear before a congressional committee to keep her alive, a Florida

state-court judge ordered her feeding tube removed.

And just when it finally appeared that Mrs. Schiavo's life would end—which is what she would want, according to her husband—Congress took the extraordinary step of passing a piece of legislation on a Sunday for the sole purpose of keeping Mrs. Schiavo alive. And Bush canceled the rest of his vacation to fly back to the White House to sign that legislation late on a Sunday night.

After signing the legislation, Bush explained that "Congress came together to give Terri Schiavo's parents another opportunity to save their daughter's life." He added, "In extraordinary circumstances like this, it is wise to always err on the side of life." Really?

The idea that Congress and the president are attempting to promote a "culture of life" is laughable. If they wanted

to promote a culture of life, they would work weekends to end hunger in America, and Bush would cut short vacations to make sure that no child goes to bed hungry in a land that produces more food than its own citizens can eat.

Can anyone imagine what Congress and the president might achieve if they approached real problems that affect millions of Americans the same way they've approached this sensational case that affects exactly one person?

I would like for the Congress and the president to explain why they will work weekends and cancel vacations for the possibility of saving the life of a woman whom doctors say does not even know she is alive. I would like for the Congress and the president to explain why they're so concerned that this woman might starve if her feeding tube is removed when one out

continued on page 20

TOO PARTISAN

With its new director, the Human Rights Campaign moves farther to the left

There's nothing wrong with Democrats heading gay-rights groups even in this Republican age. But the Human Rights Campaign's new leader, Joe Solmonese, is among the most partisan Democrats ever hired by a "nonpartisan" national gay political group. While he may surprise us, Solmonese starts with a huge deficit in credibility and influence in Washington, D.C. That's bad for the movement.

With the federal government now firmly in the grips of conservative Republicans, HRC continues to move left. Last year HRC made error after error in this vein: appointing as its executive director Cheryl Jacques, a Massachusetts Democratic legislator whose tenure lasted barely longer than the process to select her; endorsing John Kerry for president so early, it lost any hope to influence his campaign; backing transgender inclusion in a federal

employment law that would kill the bill; and endorsing a Democratic challenger over Arlen Specter, a senior gay-friendly Republican who is now chairman of the critically important Senate Judiciary Committee. And now Solmonese.

Not long ago HRC was managed competently and smartly, growing in size and power. In the 1990s and continuing through 2003, under the leadership of Elizabeth Birch, HRC could usually be counted on to represent the whole gay community, including Republicans and independents. Its lobbying, its rhetoric, and its hiring of staff reflected a reality obvious to all but the most obtuse: that gay equality will never be secure if we work only with one party while ignoring or blindly opposing the one in power.

While most of its money and its endorsements understandably went to Democrats, HRC supported gay-friendly Republicans

in hotly contested races even when liberal Democrats ran against them, as when the group endorsed Al D'Amato over Chuck Schumer for the Senate in 1996. The gay left squawked about that, but HRC never wobbled. As the Specter race showed, it is inconceivable that HRC would take a similar stand today.

Prior to coming to HRC, Solmonese worked exclusively to elect Democratic candidates. According to Federal Election Commission records obtained by gay activist Michael Petrelis, Solmonese has donated thousands of dollars to Democratic candidates but not one dime to any Republican, no matter how pro-gay.

Solmonese spent the last 12 years working for Emily's List, a fundraising group devoted solely to electing female Democratic candidates who support abortion rights. So if you're a male Democrat who supports abortion rights, you get →

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LeftOut

continued from page 18

of every eight children in America under the age of 12 goes to bed hungry every night, and when someone in the world dies of starvation every 3.6 seconds.

But they can't explain it because it doesn't make any sense except in the world of politics, where perception means everything and reality means nothing. The perception the politicians are promoting is that they value life. The reality is that their political acts don't reflect it.

Personally, I think Congress and the president overstepped their bounds and injected themselves for political reasons into an issue that should be left to the states and to the families of individuals like Mary Schiavo. But I appreciate that this is an issue that reasonable individuals can disagree about. What no one can disagree about is that there are millions of children who go to bed hungry every night and who are undisputedly aware of it.

What about those starving individuals? Why can't Congress and the president promote a culture of life for them? What's so special about Terri Schiavo?

Writing from the liberal side, Houston attorney Daryl Moore has a general practice and is board certified in civil appellate law.

OutRight

continued from previous page

no money. If you're a female Republican who supports abortion rights, you get nothing. But if you're antigay and support abortion rights and you're a female Democrat, Emily's List loves you.

An example of the latter is the support given by Emily's List, under Solmonese's leadership, to Inez Tanenbaum, a pro-choice Democrat who ran for a Senate seat last year in South Carolina. It did not matter to Solmonese's group that Tanenbaum supported a constitutional amendment banning gay marriage, the very worst thing a candidate could do right now on the issue of gay equality.

Perhaps that's all in Solmonese's past, a necessary bow to the priorities of his old boss, and he will now adjust to the needs of his new employer. Fair enough, though this well-known track record won't help when he comes calling in Republican congressional offices.

There are more reasons to be concerned. Announcing his appointment, HRC's press release included the obligatory paeon to

bipartisanship. But this was overwhelmed by an emphasis on how "progressive" Solmonese is. (Progressive is now code language for that unspeakable thing, "liberal.") HRC informs us that he led "efforts to elect progressive candidates." He made Emily's List "the nation's foremost progressive electoral powerhouse." HRC quotes one supporter as praising him for a "tireless drive to create a more progressive America."

A Republican president just won another four-year term. The GOP has won seven out of the last 10 presidential elections. Republicans have won majorities in the House of Representatives in six consecutive national elections. The Republican Senate majority grew in 2004 and is coming close to the super-majority needed to ram through anything it wants. The federal courts have become so conservative that liberal academics are starting to talk about the virtues of democracy. In this climate, it is not a political asset in Washington to be a foremost progressive.

That is, it's not a political asset if one wants to appeal to both parties. But that may not be what Solmonese, or HRC, want.

Here is Solmonese, quoted in the *Washington Post*, introducing himself to the world as a gay leader: "This struggle that we're in in this country right now is not just for GLBT Americans but for all progressives."

Mark that well. Solmonese wants to work for "all progressives." He sees himself leading the whole struggle of the proletariat. It's not just gay rights he wants, but a better world as defined by the left.

That's his right. But HRC once represented "all gays," some of whom are not progressives, and did so in a way that appealed to both parties, not just to the progressive one. With the appointment of Solmonese, it is much harder for HRC to present itself as nonpartisan. Indeed, it now barely pretends to be.

The gay-rights movement needs effective political advocacy in Washington, so we must wish Solmonese and HRC the best. But we do so in the way one wishes the best to the unrepentant drunkard as he pours another.

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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by Annise D. Parker

IT'S THAT TIME

Houston politicians hit the campaign trail once again

Trees are budding, azaleas are blooming, days last longer. What a great time of year... unless you're a Houston politician.

Yes, I used the P word. I admit it. What choice do I have when Houston forces public officials to saddle up and hit the campaign trail every two years?

Campaign season officially started February 1. That's the day candidates can begin raising money for the city's November election. It seems like only yesterday I was campaigning.

There are always exceptions, but for a candidate with no name identification it takes at least \$250,000 to run a successful at-large City Council campaign and more to run for city controller, especially if there's a serious opponent. (I raised and spent \$300,000 in my first council race in 1997, then raised \$700,000 for controller in 2003.)

It takes \$25,000 just to open the campaign doors—for office rent, phone, utilities, office manager, printing, postage, insurance. Big expenditures like television advertising and large mailouts separate serious candidates from well-intentioned also-rans.

As summer gets hotter, campaigns cool down. Not many people want to think about local elections in the summer. Candidates quietly go about their work, attending as many events as possible, talking to voters about issues, and raising money. That doesn't just mean fundraisers and hiring the right campaign manager. That means dozens and dozens of phone calls asking for money—not at all my favorite pastime, which I call “Dialing for Dollars” or “Smile and Dial.”

Labor Day

By Labor Day, serious campaigns are in high gear. Some voters may think campaign sea-

son is just kicking off, but filing deadline is only a few weeks away. Any candidate who waits this late to start campaigning is naive, rich, or jumping into the race because the frontrunner has problems.

Press coverage picks up as candidate forums and endorsement meetings fill the calendar. Some candidates are already running TV ads. In a city this large, television is just about the only practical way to reach voters with your message and the image you're trying to craft. But how many candidates are really the same people you see in commercials?

Behind the Smile

“Sure, I'll vote for your ordinance. What do I get in return?” I heard this far too many times in my six years on council from respected colleagues adored by their constituents. What a different view it can be from the inside.

So how does the public know if they're voting for Jekyll, Hyde, or a real public servant?

Being this informed takes a little time. Watching an occasional council meeting (especially one with long discussions) on the Municipal Channel lets you see your elected officials in action and in so much more revealing detail than newspapers or television news can possibly show. Watch enough council meetings and you can separate the smart, prepared members from the others. Better yet, watch an occasional committee meeting. That's where council members really let their personalities hang out because they know not many people are watching.

Talk to people who work for the city and ask them about elected officials. They hear and see all sorts of things. Go to candidate forums during campaigns and talk face to face with a candidate. Then see if they follow up on your issues.

Many people think politicians love to campaign. We try to look so cheerful as we work our way around the room, shaking as many hands as possible. I do love meeting people and listening to their concerns. And elected officials who spend too much time in the office risk isolating themselves from the very people they serve.

But I hate campaign season. Having to campaign while in office is like having two jobs, and I'm quite happy with just one.

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 (Time Warner Cable 16) at 2 and 8 a.m. and 2 and 8 p.m.

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Cumming—the Queer

Actor Alan Cumming talks about the new movie musical *Reefer Madness* debuting on Showtime this month, Bush, being queer, and much more

by Blase DiStefano
Photos by Paul Michaud

Ramming it: Alan Cumming as Goat Man in *Reefer Madness*, a Showtime original movie musical which premiered at the Sundance Film Festival. *Reefer Madness* debuts on Showtime on Saturday, April 16, at 7 p.m. INSET: Cumming with a reefer.



When I answered Alan Cumming's phone call and asked where he was, he told me he was in New York. He sounded like he had the sniffles, so I asked him if he was okay. He replied that he was just cold, that he was having trouble dialing my number, that he was walking his dogs, that he was dealing with "dog poop," and that there was snow on the ground. And he related all of this information in his heavy Scottish accent. I'm a sucker for accents.

That accent is not-at-all obvious in his films. Check out *Circle of Friends* (1995), *Romy and Michele's High School Reunion* (1997), *Urbania* (2000), *The Anniversary Party* (2001), *X2: X-Men United* (2003), and any of his 30-or-so other films.

Cumming has also appeared on many TV programs, including the extremely queer 1999 Disney version of *Annie* with costars Kathy Bates, Kristin Chenoweth, Victor Garber, and Audra MacDonald. Many of us have been on pins and needles waiting for *Mr. and Mr. Nash*, a long-rumored series based on *Hart to Hart*, the '70s crime caper that starred Robert Wagner and Stefanie Powers. Cumming as half of an interior decorating couple—both men—who stumbles upon murders? Cumming gives us the latest scoop on the show's future. →

Cumming—the Queer

continued from previous page

Then there's Cumming—the Fragrance, which was launched in February. What's Cumming like in a bottle? See sidebar on opposite page.

At press time, Cumming was to have received the Vito Russo Award at the March 28 GLAAD Media Awards in New York City. Named after a founding member of GLAAD and author of *The Celluloid Closet*, the Vito Russo Award is presented to an openly lesbian, gay, or bisexual member of the entertainment or media community for outstanding contributions toward eliminating homophobia.

For more Cumming, read on.

Blase DiStefano: You originally starred in *Cabaret* in London. Did it differ much from the 1998 Broadway revival?

Alan Cumming: It was basically the same style and same production, but the Broadway production was fuller. [To his dog: *Honey, watch out.*] Sorry, hang on. [Come here!] Sorry.

Sam Mendes directed it only in London, and then Rob Marshall co-directed it with him in New York. So it had the same vibe, but it was a bit more bigger and better.

And your character, the emcee, was basically the same?

Basically. I think I was better in New York. I think I was not so confident in London.

In the Broadway version, you pulled members of the audience to dance on stage with you. Does one stand out? [Laughs] Well, we did it hundreds of times. I once picked out Walter Cronkite. He was the most famous one

And he handled it well?

He was great. It was a joke on me, 'cause I didn't know who he was. When I recognized his name, I was like "oooo."

I picked someone who was actually German and started speaking to me in German. That was kind of embarrassing.

A nice segue from *Cabaret* would be your duet with Liza Minnelli on "Baby, It's Cold Outside" [on the CD *Home for the Holi-*

days]. How did that come about?

Broadway Cares/Equity Fights AIDS is a really great organization, and they asked me if I would be on this record they were doing. I don't like singing very much, so I thought I'd rather do a duet than sing on my own. I know Liza, and so it was actually my assistant at the time who said, Why don't you ask her? He even suggested doing that song, so it was all his fault.

It worked out well.

I know. I really like it. It's so funny. It makes me laugh every time I hear it.

Broadway Cares is a really great organization, and that's one of many that you're involved in. You trekked the Great Wall of China, and that was for the American Foundation for AIDS Research. How was that compared to your average everyday existence?

[Laughs] Lack of showering. I quite liked that actually. We didn't shower from Tuesday morning to Friday night. I liked it. Camping—don't normally camp... in a tent.

[Laughs]

What I really liked best about it was getting to know all those people. You're flung into this very out-of-your-comfort-zone experience. And you just have to get on with it and get on with each other. I met some really nice people. (That reminds me—someone e-mailed me the other day and I need to call him back.)

And I love going to other cultures where you feel so alien. And exercise that much.

You did get a lot of exercise, didn't you? That was a long walk.

We walked for a week. It was really hilly, like being on a Stairmaster.

(My dog is sitting on top of a bench, and this dog under the bench is sniffing another dog's bum. It's so funny.)

We got to find out a lot about China and AIDS, and it's out of control. It was really fascinating to see how they're dealing with that.

The next one they [American Foundation for AIDS Research] are doing is in Viet-

nam. They're trying to focus on different areas in Asia that need the publicity as well as the money.

How did you become involved in Crusaid [Britain's national fundraiser for HIV/AIDS]?

Originally in Glasgow. I was in a Scottish branch of it, but that was in about 1986.

That's when AIDS...

It was when it hit Glasgow or hit Scotland or hit Britain. It was Crusaid in London, and they had the Scottish branch of it, so that was when I kind of got involved.

You were pretty young then.

I was. I was young and impressionable.

Was that when you started doing stand-up?

Kind of concurrently when I was doing cabaret sketches at drama school, I started this stand-up thing with this other boy. We actually did a lot of things for Crusaid as well. It was called Victor and Barry. We did that in Scotland. We did that quite a lot actually for quite a few years and did our own show on TV in Scotland.

So you're pretty comfortable with stand-up and being in front of people?

I don't know if *comfortable* is the word. I used to actually love the thrill of it. I just did trapeze last week, and I love it. I miss that kind of fun in making films. I did this thing for Comedy Central last year...

Out on the Edge?

Yeah. That was like doing my stand-up routine again. I really liked that. I'd like to do some more stuff like that.

In *Out on the Edge* you seemed comfortable.

Making speeches and things I find really nerve-racking. I get these awards, and I'm racked with nerves, when you're just speaking as yourself.

I get really nervous before interviews. And it's silly 'cause I've interviewed so many people.

Of course, you'd think you wouldn't be nervous, and you'd think I wouldn't be nervous because I've been on stage so many times, but still. And I do a talk show, and I get really nervous.

But once you're out there, it's okay?

Yeah.

I saw you on *The Daily Show*, and that was great.

Thank you.



Skirt? Kilt?: Cumming hosted *Out on the Edge*, a gay comedy show on Comedy Central. As a hostess should, he changed his hairdo many times throughout the evening.

That was so much fun, because you were on the show to promote *Son of the Mask*, but I think Jon Stewart asked you one question about that, and then the rest of the interview was all about Cumming—the Fragrance. It was great.

He's lovely. I really like his show. The Cumming people are so happy because I got all that extra press.

[Dogs bark.] Are you still walking the dogs?

Yeah.

What are their names?

One's called Honey—the bigger one—and the one I'm holding, who's shivering now, is called Leon. It's short for Napoleon. Honey is in the ad campaign for Cumming, actually [see sidebar below].

You've come out as bisexual. Does that label bother you?

Not really. I sort of think in a way that when I was discussing it, I wanted to say it's a gray area for me. It wasn't black and white. I feel a lot of the time people close themselves off to certain experiences. I occasionally have sexual relations with a young lady. I still find women attractive, but I have a boyfriend, and I have sex with big fat men. [Both laugh] I like the word *clear*.

Clear?

Queer. With the bisexual thing, yeah, I still find women attractive. I don't feel I'm like a gay man who's repelled by women, or the

idea of a vagina is horrific. So that's what that's about. I have a boyfriend, and I essentially am gay, but for me it's important to say that's what it is. Everyone wants you to be one thing or the other. And for me, it isn't.

What was your childhood like?

I grew up in a very remote area of Scotland. My dad was a forester, and we grew up in a country estate. So it was kind of remote and a bit weird. It wasn't particularly happy. It was sort of strict and a stuck-in-the-middle-of-nowhere thing.

Do you still keep in touch with your parents?

I keep up with my mom. I don't see my dad.

When did you move from Scotland?

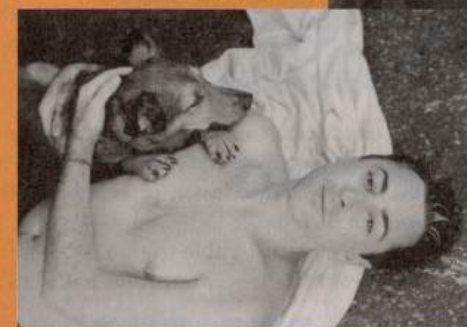
I moved from Scotland in about '88 or '89. I did a play that transferred to the Royal Court Theatre in London from Edinburgh, so that's when I first went to London. I lived there for about 10 years, and I still have an apartment there.

The main reason we're supposed to be doing this interview is for *Reefer Madness*. Is there any way you wouldn't have read that script? The idea of a musical of *Reefer Madness* is just...

It's fantastic. I couldn't believe it. Just hilarious. I read it in Australia when I was finishing *Son of the Mask*. I was like, *I can't wait for the offices to open up and get the time zone right to go to the phone and say how much I want to do this.* →

Cumming—the Fragrance

Cumming in his diva pose. INSET: Cumming caresses his dog Honey.



It tells the room when you are Cumming in, and tells a person that you have Cumming on. The website www.cummingthefragrance.com refers to a "fragrance with top notes of bergamot, black pepper, scotch pine, whiskey; core notes of cigar, heather, Douglas fir, rubber; base notes of leather, highland mud, peat fire, and white truffle." • Around the *OutSmart* offices, Cumming was highly rated: "There's a hint of cigar... before it's lit. And that's not a bad thing." "It smells like Silly Putty when you first open the egg. It has a very clean smell." "I thought it was warm and woody." "The smell isn't fake like many fragrances. It's light and not overpowering." And although men created it, they say, "We think of this as the first 'beyond gender' fragrance. We wanted to show the world that fragrance can be sexy, fun, and mischievous, all of which sum up Alan and Cumming—the fragrance."

Cumming—the Queer

continued from previous page

So you could tell from the script, right?

Yeah. Actually, I hadn't heard the songs at that point, but I didn't care. The songs are absolutely great. It's the tone and biting satire—that's what drew me to it.

It's going to cause a lot of controversy. If you were to analyze it, in one way it's offending so many people. It clears the board, and everyone's offended equally. Jesus comes down and sings a song. He sings a song exhorting a boy not to smoke pot.

Lots of things do happen. It's just mocking that whole climate of fear that we're encouraged to live in right now.

Have you seen the original film?

I watched it before I shot the movie. I couldn't believe it. Surprising how much of the dialogue is similar.

It's really fun. So the goat man in *Reefer Madness*, the emcee in *Cabaret*, and the Nightcrawler in *X-Men 2*: Are you getting used to all that excessive makeup?

It's pretty horrific.

Is it really time consuming?

The goat man wasn't, but it is such a laugh with big horns sticking out of my head. Everyone was all dressed up for that scene. Everyone had hardly anything on.

Nightcrawler took four hours a day just for my face. Four hours early before everyone else on the set, and I was on the set for months. I was exhausted, and my skin was horrific. It was horrible, I mean horrible.

And aren't you doing the *X-Men 3*?

Yeah. [Both laugh]

Since we were talking about *Reefer Madness* and the climate, what do you think of Bush?

I think he's awful. It's an abomination. It's frightening. Every day he does more things. I couldn't believe when he got back in again. America's teachers are afraid to teach the theory of evolution because of fears of getting sued by parents. Stickers on books. It's a horrible time in American history. He's played on people's fears and people's prejudices and encouraged bigots to be more vocal in order to stay in power. It's not the time to be gay in America. I bet gay bashings have gone up recently.

Should I even mention his gay marriage amendment?

Because of this horrible thing, people say stuff like, "Well, if you let gay people get



Cumming in *Circle of Friends* (1995).



Cumming (r) with Dan Futterman in *Urbania* (2000).



Cumming (r) with Halle Berry in *X2: X-Men United* (2003).

married, what's next—marrying their pets?" Absolutely disgusting.

But I can understand if you think wedding/marriage is a straight thing. I get that. I really do. But as a civil rights issue, people who are partners and who pay their taxes don't have the same civil rights as straight people. That's what's most important. That's what's galling. And I really don't think necessarily that gay people should absolutely want to ape a straight ritual, but instead make up one for themselves.

[To Honey: *Stop it. Stop it. Good girl.*]

Speaking of "partners," what's the latest news on *Mr. & Mr. Nash*?

It's absolutely dead. Dead in the water.

No!

I know. It's terrible. It's like a big car crash. It was such a great idea. Personality clashes and watering down and pissing the studio off—it was like watching a bad TV movie. They said they weren't going to make a pilot and, frankly, I was glad, because at that point I thought the pilot was so watered down, I was kind of ashamed of it.

What a bummer.

I know. I met the two writers who originally were attached to it. They were so fantastic. It was so wicked and good. It would have been a great thing.

It's kind of horrible to draw a composite, but it all happened as Bush got re-elected and the whole gay-moral-values is one of his fears. It's hard not to think that that was part of what was in some people's minds—not necessarily the studio's—but some of the people in the process got really freaked out by certain things, like they didn't want us to wake up in the same bed.

That's a real shame 'cause it's really time for it.

I know I have time for only a couple more questions, so let's say you're stranded on a desert island and you can have only one movie with you. What would it be?

Waiting for Guffman. I love that film. I've watched it so many times, but it always makes me laugh.

Last question. You're still on that island, and you can have only one person with you. Not a friend, lover, or relative. Who would it be?

Liza. We'd never be able to get the coconuts down from the trees, but we'd both laugh our tits off.

Blase DiStefano interviewed Sharon Gless for our May 2004 issue.

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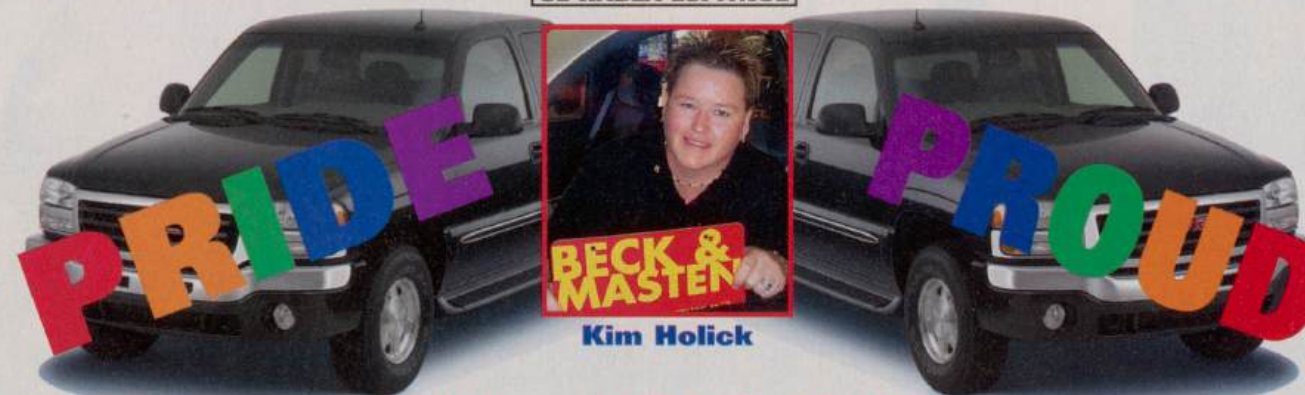
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THE BIG SPLASH

With a full slate of events in Houston and Galveston,

the annual African-American Pride celebration turns 10

by Syd Rushing

MMy grandmother educated me on how to be gay. A reed-thin Sunday-school teacher baptized me in the seventh-wonder waters of glistening faith. And a determined Mississippi village community quilted a sense of somebodyness for me to own my blackness with fervent fists.

But between judicious "raising that child up right" sessions, no one whispered the recipe of marrying my blackness with my gayness. Now today, I can only guess where the stunning spaghetti-dreadlocked male of African descent salvages his authenticity in a nation's cracked mirrors of identity—seldom, if ever, reflecting his image.

Black. Gay. Nomad. Where can a black same-gender chap celebrate his unique duality of Pride?

Even a Nobel Prize-winning mathematician would calculate that no Pride parade prototype delivers services to the totality of God's human gay garden. So the creative forces of Houston Splash envisioned our burning need and submitted the recipe to soothe our thirst by putting Houston's distinctive, indelible stamp on Black Gay Pride. This May, planners seem determined to get us soaking wet with soul-shaking music, intimate mixers and family outings. Get ready! Black Pride is in a furious, flirty renaissance across the nation from California's At the Beach, San Diego's Ebony Pride, and Chicago's Montrose celebrations. In the backyard of H-town, Derick Miles, president of Houston Splash, and vice president, Sean Dawson, are the two visionaries rebirthing Pride into Houston for 2005.

Beach boy: The Island party brings out creative costumes. The preferred color this year: purple.



JUMP INTO SPLASH

With the theme "Rebirth of Pride" for its 10th-anniversary celebration, Houston Splash has scheduled six days of roof-rocking events. These are a few—find the complete schedule at www.houstonsplash.com.

Strip Down-n-H-town

Thursday, May 5, 10 p.m.–3 a.m.
Club Inergy is the site. Promises the Splash website: "Anything involving baby oil, G-strings, and whip cream is sure to make any strong man or woman . . . scream!" Hmm. Special guest MC is Harmonica Sunbeam from New York.

Sapience Magazine Welcome Reception

Friday, May 6, 5–9 p.m.
The monthly online magazine for LGBT African Americans (www.sapiencemagazine.com), based here in Houston, and Splash welcome the flock at the Sheraton Brookhollow, the host hotel. Dominique Rashad and her Urban Lounge Mini-Review from Atlanta will perform.

Independance Vol. 10

Friday, May 6, 10 p.m.–4 a.m.
"Prepare to sweat at our 10th annual kickoff party," warns the Splash website. The site: The Meridian, the new downtown club venue. DJ Sedrick from Washington, D.C., and DJ Chris from L.A. will spin the hip-hop, rap, and R&B.

Family Day @ Celebration Station

Saturday, May 7, noon–3 p.m.
For the first time, Splash presents an

event for youngsters and their GLBT parents. There will be free food, beverages, and game tokens for the kids.

Island Invasion Beach Party

Sunday, May 8, noon–6 p.m.
On East Beach, the preferred color this year is purple. To mark the 10th year of Splash, the organizers and *Sapience Magazine* will present four \$500 book scholarships to college students in honor of the late Clifford Hunter, Splash co-founder.

SWEET, SOUTHERN EXPOSURE

Hold on to your jockstraps, boys, there's more. Some welcomed female diversity is offered with the SICs, Sisters in Charge. The Southern Exposure is an annual event for lesbian women, held in conjunction with the Houston Black Pride. Sisters are indeed doing it fabulously for themselves. The Southern Exposure specifically sprinkles an optional array of casual but elegant activities for members of the black lesbian community who prefers to escape the lively throw party scene. →

Riding in cars with girls: Autos-allowed East Beach is the site of the Island Invasion event.



The Big Splash continued from previous page

The Southern Exposure events are inclusive and conducive to all adult age groups. There are four events scheduled:

Feline Friday

Friday, May 6, 10 p.m.-3 a.m.

Guests should wear all-black attire. Dance the night away at The House of Finesse to the tomcat sounds of DJ Tommy L.

The Night of 500 Women Dance: The Southern Exposure Explosion!

Saturday, May 7, 9 p.m.-2 a.m.

DJ Tommy L will be the master of ceremonies, and there will be an elegant buffet at Rodeaux for elegant women, in an elegant setting.

The Sand-less Beach Party Texas Luau

Sunday, May 8, 3-7 p.m.

For those who do not go to the big beach party, there will be a lavish, tropical buffet, tropical drink specials, and plenty of hula-hoopla at The House of Finesse.

Texas Luau Remix—After Beach Mixer

Sunday, May 8, 7 p.m.-midnight

The party continues. Quench your thirst with a cool, tropical drink and taste the flavors of the rice and peas, jerk chicken, Aloha wings, sweet and sour chicken with jasmine rice. Kick the sand from your feet and dance to the sounds of Kahuna DJ Tommy L.

A percentage of the proceeds from Southern Exposure (www.southernexposure.org) events will support a nonprofit group within the lesbian community, says event planner and coordinator Asha Zawadi, an event planner and caterer who owns a firm called Ask Asha!

RAISE THE ROOF

Fresh Start Church dives in with a splash and spiritual spitfire, Pastor Jeffrey Campbell. From Campbell's lips to your ears, he shares his enthusiasm on the upcoming events: "God spoke to me in the year 2000 clearly stating that I would one day pastor His people. It was not until I helped organize and preached at the first-ever Splash Worship Experience in 2004 that I completely accepted what God was calling me to do, particularly in the African-American

GLBT community. It's time that we take the opportunity to embrace the reality that our sexuality and spirituality can truly co-exist without shame or guilt."

Campbell and Fresh Start (which regularly worships on Sunday afternoons at the Houston GLBT Community Center) will present two events during Splash:

Punks Screening

Wednesday, May 4, 7:30 p.m.

Fresh Start Church, Human Rights Campaign Houston, and Lambda Legal host a screening of Patrik-Ian Polk's 2000 comedy at the Angelika Film Center in Bayou Place downtown. Admission for two is free with a Houston Splash pass.

Revolution Worship Experience

Sunday, May 8, 11 a.m.

Fresh Start Church hosts the Sunday-morning service at the Sheraton Brookhollow. Bishop Yvette Flunder, the pastor of City of Refuge Church in San Francisco will be guest preacher. Flunder is the featured vocalist with Walter Hawkins & the Hawkins Family. Leo Radfor is Revolution Worship music coordinator. A-men.

THE YELLOW BRICK ROAD TO BLACK PRIDE

Achieving gay authenticity for people of African descent is a duality that is increasingly tricky to blend. Like many African Americans, our sense of being black is firmly entrenched in a separate safe deposit box of learned awareness. On the other hand, our links to our gay sexuality component is a course that was never taught successfully by our parents or even the huge chunk of cheese, the gay cultural monolith we love and hate with passion.

Let's get naked and undo the covers of dishonesty right now. Pride is desperately in need of rebirthing in this country. It is becoming incredibly challenging to find ourselves in the cosmetic collision pileup of Pride. The news magnets become Batman and Robin hotly gyrating, a gaggle of gangly gargantuan drag queens in garish wear and whoops! there goes another protruding pectoral poking me in the eye from the one thousand millionth bare-chested stud. There's more skin hanging out during Pride than at Joan Rivers' plastic surgeon's office. Frankly, my dear, there's no Pride in it.

That's why I say my grandmother taught me how to be gay. Being the iron magnolia she was, the woman was a great friend with pride. She wore pride fashionably. She wore it elegantly, quietly, and with a gracious strength. Her brand of pride lived inside her as Black Southern Creole female, and no human could whisk it away as she sashayed down the Street of 101 Self Worth for 98 years. It was nothing she proved. It was something she was. Her sex, her race, and her spirit formed an easy chain of self-identity pearls around her neck, comfortably. Peacefully. There's a north star to Pride, folks. So when Pride is within, truly within you, every human being will know it, feel it, and bow down to your throne with respect. Be sexy. Be naughty. Be 110-percent gay. But wear it exquisitely, with Pride.

Syd Rushing interviewed Vera Johnson, AIDS Foundation Houston vice president of client services, for our March issue.

Ready to splash: Houston Splash president Derick Miles (l) and vice president Sean Dawson pose at Club Bartini, site of the April 10 Mr. and Miss Bartini contest, hosted by Cookie LaCook.

PHOTO BY STEVEN DAVID



CANDY LAND

Dana Baylous, an event planner and Sam Houston State University journalism student, has announced another event during Splash week. The Candy Shop, a private party, will take place on May 6, 10 p.m., at KeyStar Events Complex. More info: www.urbanpride.net.

Through her new venture, Baylous said she plans to produce lesbian, gay, and bisexual events throughout the year. The next one is an all-male party in late June or early July. Baylous, who lives in Huntsville with her partner and five-year-old daughter, said she intends to donate 10 percent of the proceeds from every party to AIDS Foundation Houston.

FIRST SPLASH

From Ann Walton Sieber's report on Splash in our May 2002 issue:

Known as "the South's largest African-American gay/lesbian beach weekend," Houston Splash kicks off the black pride circuit. After Houston Splash the first weekend in May, Gay and Lesbian Black Pride follows in Washington, D.C., on Memorial Day weekend. Pride events then take place in both Chicago and Los Angeles over the Fourth of July weekend. The festivities end with Labor Day in Atlanta.

Splash began more than 20 years ago in Galveston, and was not a specifically black event. However, according to the promoters of Houston Splash, "as the times changed and more African-American gays attended, the Caucasian population moved Splash to Austin."

The first African-American celebration of Splash was held in 1988 at the El Mina Shrine Temple in Galveston. In 1996, Incognito co-owners Miles and the late Clifford Hunter formed Houston Splash, and through the years it expanded from a day, to a weekend, to a whole week. The number of women who participate is growing, too. Miles said about 30 percent of the crowd is female.



Island life: Photos from past Splash events courtesy Derick Miles.

A Life in the Theater

by Bradley David Williams
Photos by Kelly Catchings

*Lanford Wilson
(Fifth of July,
Talley's Folly),
who takes over
for his friend
Edward Albee in
directing new
playwrights at the
University of
Houston, chats
about his career,
drag queens, and
the Pulitzer Prize*



A Life in the Theater

continued from previous page

When the playwright Lanford Wilson was tapped last year to take over the Edward Albee New Playwrights Workshop at the University of Houston, he didn't automatically say yes.

"I'm a gardener," says Wilson, whose home base is a house in Sag Harbor, New York. "Gardening starts about April on Long Island."

Eventually persuaded by Albee to take the job, Wilson is currently spending his second spring in Houston, imparting his knowledge to the next generation of playwrights. Wilson, who turns 68 this month, won the Pulitzer Prize in 1980 for *Talley's Folly* and was a pioneer in New York's off-Broadway theater movement in the '60s, co-founding the Circle Repertory Company.

Wilson's other works, many of which include openly gay or implied-gay characters, include *The Madness of Lady Bright* (1964), *Balm in Gilead* (1965), *The Gingham Dog* (1968 and Wilson's Broadway debut), *The Hot L Baltimore* (1971), *Fifth of July* (1978), *Angels Fall* (1982), *Burn This* (1988), and *Redwood Curtain* (1993).

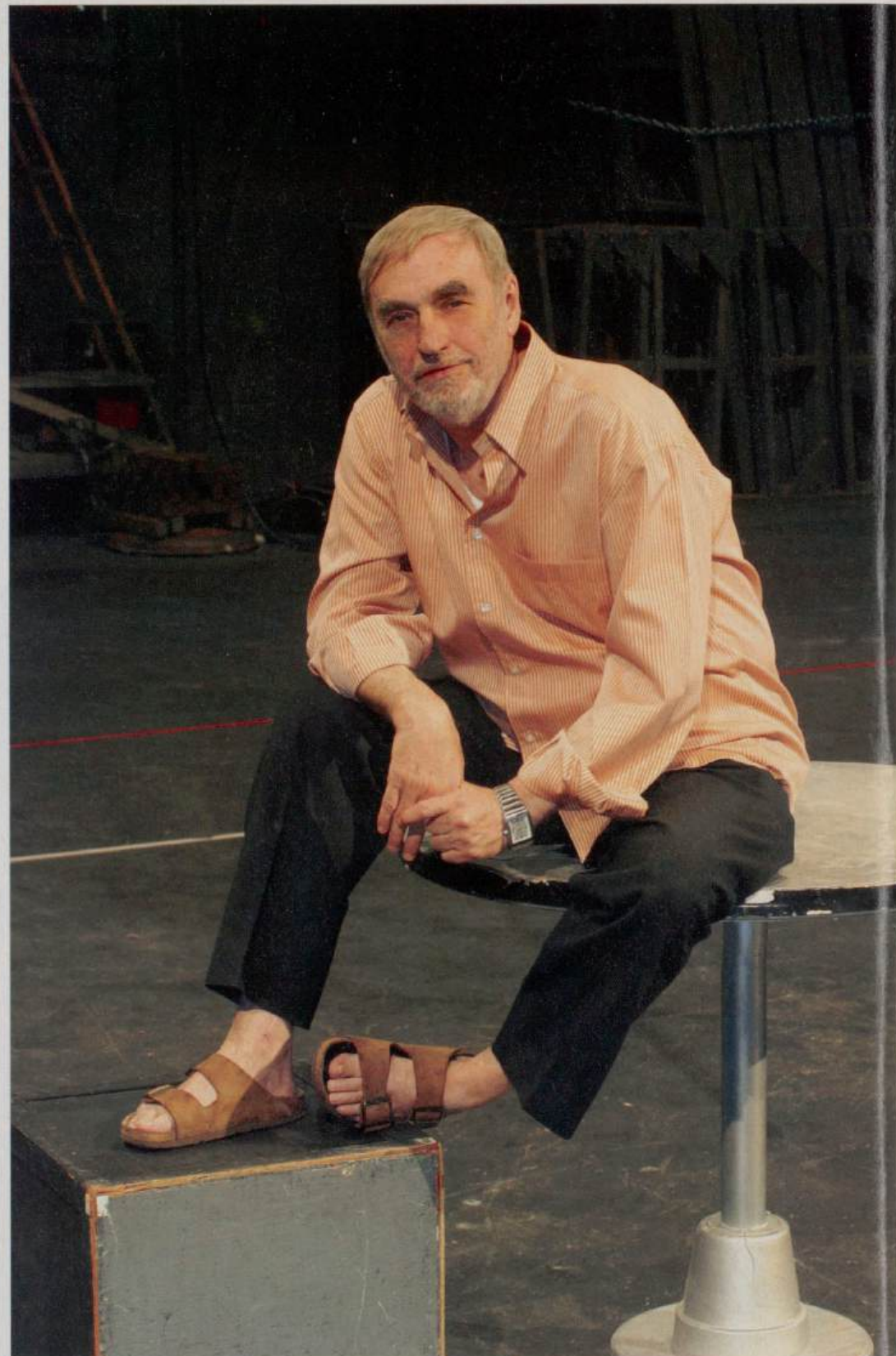
Of Wilson's work, Albee himself once remarked to the *New York Times*, "I always look forward to his plays, for I know I will always learn something about both craft and ideas."

Bradley David Williams: How did this come about with you coming to Houston to take over the Edward Albee New Playwrights' Workshop at UH?

Lanford Wilson: It started with Edward calling me. His friend was not feeling well, and Edward said, "Lanford, can you go down and spell me? Because I just can't get down there." I hemmed and hawed and finally said, "Sure," because it was Edward. You know, you don't say no to Edward.

So do you and Albee go way back?

Yes, I go way back with Edward. In 1963, he had a thing called the Playwrights' Unit. He had it in 1963, 1964, 1965... They changed



the name every year, but I joined in 1963. He had seen a play of mine off-off-Broadway, and they picked three one-acts to do that year—a play of Tom Foster's, a play of mine, and a play of Sam Sheperd's. That was my professional debut, and Edward got me drunk on stingers so I wouldn't have to be there and watch the

continued on page 106

Playing around: "I'm borrowing Harper Lee's quote—'Being a writer in this country, you have to grow a tough hide,'" says Lanford Wilson, photographed on the stage of the Lyndall Finley Wortham Theatre at the University of Houston. "I had grown such a tough hide just to protect myself from all of the negative reviews, seeing people walk out, and seeing people say, 'What a piece of shit!' on their way out at intermission for years."

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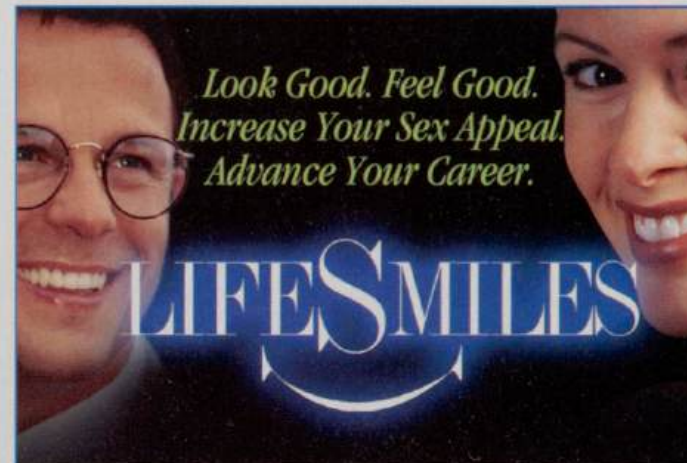
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SHATTERING CRYSTAL

TINA. CHRISSY. PARTY FAVORS. TALK. PARTY GIRL.

CUTE NAMES WE GIVE TO A SUBSTANCE THAT KILLS.

by John Royce

Illustration by Leslie Claire

One of my best friends lives in Boston and fell in love last spring. The object of that jolt was a strapping young man of 32, a doctor studying at Harvard. The object of my friend's affection went for a short trip to New York, but instead of coming in Saturday evening, the young doctor moved the flight until Sunday. Did I mention that this Harvard man was a fan of Tina?

No, not Turner. Tina also goes by Chrissy, Party Favors, Talk, Party Girl—cute names we give to a substance that kills. Now anyone who knows this demon drug, crystal methamphetamine, will appreciate the twisted logic in staying Saturday night in New York as an out-of-towner rather than in one's own hometown. It was not a wise choice, of course. Tina is not one to assist in making wise choices. But it was understandable.

This abrupt decision bothered my Boston friend. Nothing was specifically said. Young relationships need time to understand. Sunday passed without communication, but my friend finally called his new love on Monday at the school laboratory he staffed. The greeting on the answering machine was current. My friend left a message. The message wasn't returned, nor would it ever be. The young doctor did work in the lab that day—and downed a beaker of a chemical analog to radiator fluid and convulsed to death. He had simply stayed in the lab after drinking the poison and was found unconscious hours later.

Can this tragedy be rationalized? My friend has racked his head and heart for an answer. He admits nothing has to make sense, because crystal meth was likely involved. We should all know this: Meth destroys. The drug seems to "want" its users alone, ruined, isolated, and then dead—and not always in that order. Not even AIDS will kill a person as quickly as full-blown meth addiction. Crystal abuse is a largely unaddressed epidemic among gay men, and it's time to try to understand what is happening. We need to hear truth about this issue, not politics. Meth thrives on denial.

This is a drug that twists the mind so thoroughly that no level of use is safe. The young doctor had his meth use under control, he always insisted. Until he drank that beaker of poison, he did. Those who have experienced or have friends enmeshed in this addiction understand that crystal makes up its own rules and puts them in your head. The most unreasonable actions and desires present themselves as wonderful, even holy, impulses.

WHERE ARE OUR ORGANIZATIONS?

It is futile to be angry at the Human Rights Campaign or the Gay & Lesbian Alliance Against Defamation or other activist gay organizations when looking for truth and help in this crisis. These groups have grown their reputations and funding on the crisis of AIDS and more recently upon the donation-lucrative issue of gay

marriage. Meth is just so . . . gutter. There is no money in it, unless you're dealing. So the only notice our mainline gay groups have given this epidemic as it seeps into our community are headlines like "Crystal Meth Epidemic Linked to HIV Risk." Well, *duh*.

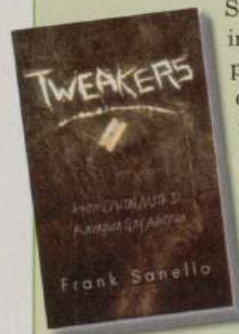
Has it seemed strange to anyone that the post-AIDS-cocktail gay community has fallen strangely silent? Even gay-themed programming seems to have only tired scripts on tired shows about tired stereotypes. Where have our cutting-edge artists gone? Sadly, a number of our finest original spirits are whacking it at a sex-club. Or taking it one day at a time. Or in jail.

Prison is the other tragedy we don't address. By their inaction, our non-involved HRCs and GLAADs are letting our nation's young, impetuous gay men be thrown to the DEA wolves. Sentencing for meth possession is predictably ruthless and worse than ineffective. Medical journals give the feds exhaustive biological analysis of the drug as ammo for press releases, but nothing about harm reduction or rehabilitation. The result of our war on drugs is that meth is everywhere, and we know almost nothing about it. Meth users need facts, not jail time or shame.

The fact that drug abuse is rising in the face of a vicious, bitter war on our citizens is ominous. There is a sinister evil in meth, and it is chewing through our population. Meth is gay crack, nothing less. The drug was conceived by evil for evil: Meth →

RESOURCES

In *Tweakers: How Crystal Meth Is Ravaging Gay America* (Alyson), Los Angeles-based journalist Frank



Sanello presents an in-depth study of the problem, drawing on conversations with addicts and experts in the gay community. This new book includes an extensive listing of treatment centers and other resources.

Montrose Counseling Center recently launched a Methamphetamine Addiction Prevention Program, which sends peers to weekend raves with information about crystal meth addiction and prevention. The counseling center partners with the Center for Success and Independence residential treatment facility for this program.

The chemical dependency treatment program at Montrose Counseling Center offers state-licensed outpatient services. Fees are based on a sliding scale. More info: 713/529-0037, www.montrosecounselingcenter.org/info/cd.html.

A Crystal Meth Anonymous group, Ice Breakers, meets at Montrose Counseling Center, Room 15, at 8:15 p.m. on Wednesday. Contact: MontroseCMA@hotmail.com.

The Lambda Center hosts a Crystal Meth Anonymous meeting on Saturday, 9:30 p.m. Info: MontroseCMA@hotmail.com, www.lambdahouston.org.

The Pride Institute substance-abuse treatment facility has a location in Arlington. Info: 800/258-2440, 800/547-7433, www.pride-institute.com.

On the web:

- Crystal Meth Anonymous, www.crystalmeth.org
- CrystalRecovery.com, www.crystalrecovery.com
- Harm Reduction Coalition, www.harmreduction.org
- Life or Meth, www.lifeormeth.com
- MethAbuse.net, www.methabuse.net
- Tweaker.org, www.tweaker.org

Crystal continued from previous page

originated in pre-war Japan in 1919 in a search for a substance that would make soldiers more aggressive and increase stamina. Military experiments proved that soldiers on meth were indeed capable of long forced marches. The problem was that sleep-deprived twerker-soldiers could not follow orders. Hitler himself is reputed to have shot up with meth, which may explain the ferocity of his increasingly psychotic commands late in World War II. Meth has a pedigree of evil.

Those using the drug come to know it as a powerful and seductive force—but too late. Meth brings together, and then isolates. We fail to contain this growing threat because we are trapped in a mindset of punishment and compliance by force. Magazine articles written by hurt or irritated friends of meth users explaining why they are abandoning the friendship miss the point: The meth-using friend is cut off from normal feeling. Real life for a meth addict becomes increasingly unfriendly and unbearable. Harshness from friends and jail time have nothing to offer. The baggie does.

In fact, harsh words and sullen abandonment are allies of meth in the drug's observable urge to destroy. Recovery from meth for the truly addicted is as tough as recovery from heroin—another factoid mostly missing from our sterile media. Meth begins the corruption. Our laws complete it.

IS THERE A WAY OUT?

There is an aphorism from the Roman poet Horace: "It is your problem when your neighbor's wall is on fire." Our neighbors' walls are burning all around us. Are we too in denial to see the similarity between the sadistic Abu Ghraib naked-hooded prison scandals and a crystal-induced sex event gone bad? This is the devil's drug. Meth is seeping in, rising. All it needs is more ignorance, more hostility, more self-righteousness.

Only one thing has been proven to heal meth addiction—besides death—and that is spirituality. It seems incredible, but faith is the cornerstone of successful drug treatment. Compassion and surrender works when nothing else does. Force cannot solve this problem.

But America will continue using force, because we have not learned our lessons. There are so many examples we fail to acknowledge. We do not grasp the implications that the plague of AIDS spreads because of the body's heightened immune response to the virus. Or that

infections increase as we shun AIDS victims, causing sufferers to avoid testing, avoid treatment, avoid telling. We haven't acknowledged that our efforts to defeat terrorism through military might are draining us and inflaming terror. Israel's eye-for-an-eye retaliation against a displaced Palestinian population has grown into an international threat. Our domestic war against drugs has only driven the drug culture deeply into an underworld that eats at society's foundation. We have not learned our lessons.

Right now, random drug testing is beginning in our schools. Judging from the effectiveness of past drug-war efforts, this will accelerate the crisis. The legal horrors we visit upon drug users who get caught are both harmful and useless. What is needed is apparently unthinkable: The solution is—*gasp*—tolerance and compassion. *Nooo!* Only a girly-man would suggest such a thing. Oddly, the alternative is quite literally hell.

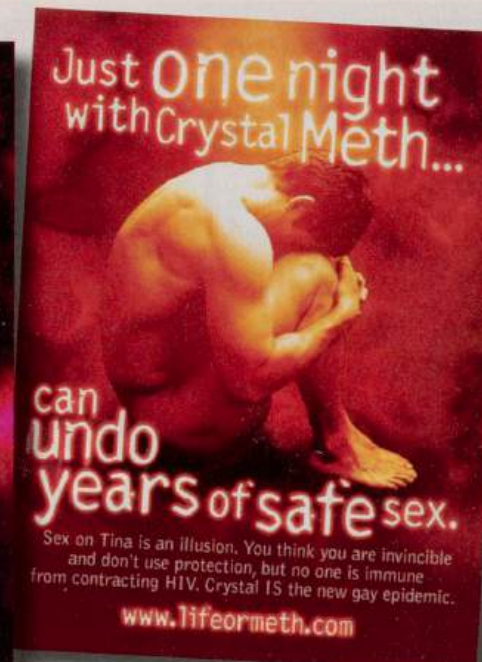
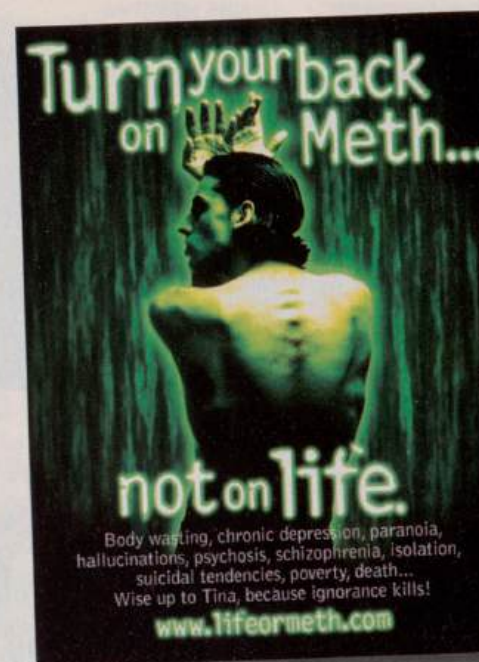
It may seem a small tragedy that one bright, gifted man took himself away with a drink. We don't know him. We can't personally feel his loss. But another light is gone, and the world will never know what contributions that young doctor might have made to our world. This country has visibly degenerated since the loss of a generation of gay artists, and meth is entering the spiral. As a society, we may be coming untethered, one life at a time.

We can learn, though. We can try to understand what this drug is about and deal with it honestly. There are stages to meth addiction. It doesn't have to consume us. We can use our God-given minds. Gays are trendsetters, and we could make a difference by understanding.

THE TRUTH

The problem and allure of crystal meth is that it removes conscience. A crystal user may inhabit this world without shame. For too many gay people, this means enjoyment of adult life for the first time. Music comes alive, unwanted fat magically melts off, amazing sex is only a bump away. Meth offers the reality, however brief and destructive, of a better world. That is a damnation upon the culture we live in, a culture that offers nothing and less to those who love differently. Meth addiction is based on the soul's need for change, especially a gay man's soul, a mercurial creation. People stumbling into drugs do not view meth as a problem. It is the solution.

Meth addiction does not begin as an evil menace. Early meth experiences



Meth watch: London-based activist Gary Leigh established Life or Meth, a crystal meth-abstinence resource targeting gay men, in 2002. These three images are part of a poster campaign, available for free download at www.lifeormeth.com.

are often about getting routine tasks done with energy, enthusiasm, and enjoyment. Yes, the loss of a night or two of sleep is inconvenient, but there are the compensations of great sex, a clean house, and new friends. These are not bad intentions.

But soon the tendrils of addiction lead the user into set patterns of destruction: marathon sex without boundaries, days without sleep, malnutrition, weight loss, boyfriend loss, friend loss, job loss, health loss, conscience loss. The user realizes the need to stop, but doesn't want to stop. The problem is recognized, but only in theory.

Later, after a lost job, a lost friend or 10, the user *does* want to stop. (Possible jail time seldom affects a decision to quit drugs, it is significant to note). As losses mount, the meth user wants to stop very much. But this is when Tina turns into Ike.

Meth reconfigures neural pathways in the brain that produce pleasure. After a period of crystal use, the user becomes unable to feel pleasure in ordinary activity. Time off the drug becomes a weary effort without joy. Attempts to stop are made, but the drug is in the psyche, waiting. One slip, and the user is back in the drug's grip again. Willpower degrades, and the soul begins to shudder.

That is the trap of Tina. Once the need and desire to quit are in agreement, it becomes impossible to do so. All the user's friends are now fellow tweakers, and temptation has become as real as a

whisper in your ear. Police, a judgmental community, and the rigors of life under capitalism do not make life off drugs in any way appealing, and a soul will not forever accept the bleak misery our attitudes and laws impose. With the help of meth, that soul will leave this world, and leave it poorer. The only proven solution is spiritual change. This fact is profound, if we will only pay attention.

To the self-righteous, drug users are infested, sin-filled rejects. How unfunny it is that these users are often among the brightest and most talented. Our punitive mindset means the addict must choose to give up his favorite moments of life because that is killing him, not because there is anything to live for. That is the reason the meth plague has no end in sight.

How strange and sad to live in a culture where a drug offers more than existence, but that is what we are facing. This is what we have created. We can continue to vilify and punish these "offenders" of society. We can continue to punish the afflicted and cause pain to the suffering—in fact, we surely will. But another fact is that force-based societies have a long habit of dying out. A hint of our future may be seen in that moment my Boston friend's new love took a dark look at a beaker of death, and chose it.

John Royce, a former Houstonian, now lives in Austin. He edits an equestrian website, www.cleanround.com. This is his first contribution to OutSmart.

MORE ON METH

According to news reports, 10 percent of patients admitted to drug treatment programs in the Chicago area enter for meth addiction, compared with 7.5 percent a year ago and about 3 percent in 1998. According to a January 2005 *Los Angeles Times* investigation, statistics from the STOP AIDS Project indicate that one-fifth of gay and bisexual men in San Francisco have used speed in the preceding six months.

The Texas Department of Safety cites a dramatic increase in the number of meth lab seizures between 1998 (20 labs) and 2002 (350+ labs), with no more current data yet available.

Information continues to develop quickly about the meth epidemic, including the recent news of gay men who use meth who have contracted the drug-resistant and exceptionally virulent strain of HIV. In addition, a new, so-called "Nazi" method for manufacturing meth has been developed that is cheaper, easier, and faster.

SPIES in the HOUSE of LOVE WON OUT

Edited by Tim Brookover

Protest photos by Dalton DeHart • Individual photos by Blase DiStefano



Real love: Protesters lined up across the freeway from Grace Community Church, site of Love Won Out.

Several intrepid GLBT individuals and allies infiltrated the Focus on the Family Love Won Out conference in February, including one who was tossed out. We asked them to return with their reports

Love Won Out, the Focus on the Family gay-conversion conference, stopped in Houston on February 19. Sue Null and PFLAG Houston (Parents, Families and Friends of Lesbians and Gays) organized a protest across the freeway from Grace Community Church, ground zero that day in the culture wars. Null and a number of other queer operatives went a step further, slipping into the event to get an inside look from the other camp.

Here, and at www.outsmartmagazine.com, are reports from six of the brave ones.

Dr. Craig Oettinger

The staff could not have been more gracious and the conference ran exactly on time, but underneath that wrapping was an enormous lump of fear and despair that dominated the day. The fear seemed caused by change in American culture; the despair was caused by the lives of the "ex-gays" on display and the contradictions in their analysis of homosexuality.

This was not a dispassionate crowd.

People paid their \$50 to attend because they or a family member had engaged in same-sex behavior or they feared for their children, many of whom who were brought to the conference to be inoculated. American society is changing and becoming more accepting of homosexuals. The conference promised these good folks that fundamentalism could protect their families from this rising tide of homosexuality.

The conference was a financial success: Over \$45,000 was raised through registration, and many thousands of dollars of books and recordings were sold. But the Christian right cannot change the lives of the people who paid all that cash, because all those words do not speak to the reality of American families or gay and lesbian lives. . . .

The conference defined homosexuality as a sin; it does not come from God but is an indication of a person's separateness from

God. . . . Although every ex-gay who spoke said that parents were not to blame, each told horrific stories of parental negligence and abuse. Ex-lesbian Jane Boyer reflected on her abuse by men. Ex-lesbian Melissa Fryrear cried about her loneliness and inability to find a kind and loving man. Host and ex-gay Mike Haley said his father has never said he loves his son. This is real pain, and it was easy to be sympathetic to this desperate need of the "ex-

gays" to be loved. Their analysis of homosexuality, however, is right out of the 1950s, when homosexuality was defined as a reaction to distant fathers and overprotective mothers. This analysis directly conflicts with the right-wing commitment to traditional gender roles. In traditional families men are supposed to dominate the family, earn money, and provide protection. Women are supposed to be subordinate, stay at home,



Dr. Craig Oettinger

and raise kids. No wonder fathers seem distant and mothers over-involved with their children. Since families are seen as the source of homosexual pathology, it follows that to cure their sinful behavior homosexuals must turn to the church. Thus "ex-gay" Mike Haley insists that only loving, nurturing Christian men can provide the strong, intimate male connection that can heal gay men. The goal seemed to be to find a loving male substitute for a distant father, a function first fulfilled by a male lover and subsequently a loving male church. I can understand the need, but it sounded pretty gay to me. . . .

Oddly for a Christian conference, the theology of the speakers seems to be a narrow view of a vengeful, fearful Old Testament God. Ex-lesbian Jane Boyer spoke of being "broken" and "suffering." There was no hint of a loving, forgiving, and inclusive New Testament God.

It is true that irresponsible homosexual behavior (and heterosexual behavior) can be addictive and destructive. It is also true that abuse, dysfunctional families, and desperate loneliness are problems in America, both in the homosexual and heterosexual communities. These are real problems that cry out for loving and spiritual solutions. . . .

Like generations of African-American slaves, gays and lesbians will continue to form caring and supportive families even if they cannot legally marry. These families will nurture all of a person's identity, not only sexual needs. And GLBT people will continue to be welcome and celebrate God's creation in many of our city's churches, and synagogues. By example, empathy, and love, the GLBT community will bring healing to those who in February found a conference based on despair and fear.

Oettinger is a sociologist and a member of the First Universalist Unitarian Church board of trustees.

Nicole Craig

Upon arrival, my stomach was churning, and I was petrified of being sniffed out. Throughout the day, we talked to a few young people who were like-minded with us. It was as if we had a secret signal that radiated from us and drew in the kids who weren't listening to their message. We had a good time chatting with a guy from Colorado. His parents sent him—plane tickets, hotel reservation, and all. He told us he liked what FOF [Focus on the Family] does with respect to abused kids and women, etc., which was nice to hear



Nicole Craig

but all the same discouraging, given FOF's attack on gays. There was also a young man from Tyler, Texas, that we chatted with during lunch who was there with his parents. He was sitting in front of us in the beginning, and his dad had his arm around him. It was cute to see his folks supporting him. It was amusing because he told us he was just humoring his parents, and it was apparent—he was wearing eyeliner and clad in Wiccan jewelry. There also appeared to be quite a few young people who had the same mission as we did, and were only there to scoff at the LWO [Love Won Out] message.

Craig is a University of Houston student.

Scott Chalupa

My trip to lunch was a little cramped. The owner of the Explorer stuffed himself into the space between the back seat and the tailgate. Five students from New Mexico not only made room for me in their vehicle, but also made lunch for me in their hotel room. They shared not only what little food and drink there was, but also the experiences that brought them to their "struggle with homosexuality." Two of the three girls were ex-girlfriends. One broke with the other to join the ex-gay movement. The other followed, hoping to stamp out the pain and spiritual imbalance. One of the guys had always known homosexuality was wrong in the eyes of God and described →

his same-sex attractions as innocuous flies to be swatted away. The other was embroiled in actively fighting his attractions and fantasies, which were still fairly pervasive. Not one of the students ever said they never had same-sex attractions any more, just that they had found other ways to deal with them. I also learned that ex-gays measured success much like an alcoholic measures days of sobriety.

They not only freely shared intimate details of their lives as ex-gays, but also asked me about my own sexuality and why I was attending the conference. I told them I was happily homo and was attempting to learn more about the ex-gay ministries (which was most of the truth). Despite my lack of desire to struggle with my homosexuality, they were still friendly, warm, and compassionate. They were not the only ones. The entire conference was peopled with other Christians just dying for the chance to reach out to anyone who walked through the doors. . . .

The entire antigay message had been

tive nature of gay nightlife and promiscuity. The central message was that a happy, hetero life is the byproduct of pursuing a relationship with Christ. But where was the animosity? Where was the fire and brimstone? Where were the cries of "Get behind me, Satan"?

While digesting my day in the belly of the whale (which felt more like a walk in the Garden of Eden), I came to a few realizations. The gay community, in large part, has bought into the image the fundamentalist church touts for us. We have settled into a complacent, homogenous crowd of *Will & Grace* and *Queer Eye*. If these are the brightest examples of gay America, then we are in serious trouble. The worst stereotypes launched like scud missiles from the grassroots preachers are still



Scott Chalupa

grounded in fact, no matter how offended we get. And I have noticed that the more the portrait strikes home, the more offended we are. We have become an image-based, sub-standard culture, in which a verbal knife in the back improves your social standing more than a genuine compliment.



reshaped. "Love the sinner, hate the sin," was officially stricken from the vocabulary. They also encouraged families to stay solid, together. Family members were told to love and accept their homosexuals unconditionally (while maintaining a firm, vocal belief that homosexuality is against God's natural design, of course). The usually obvious spiritual violence that so often permeates the fundamentalist movement was entirely edited out of the opening pitch. Of course, there was an excessively negative attention given to the "gay agenda." Yes, there were accusations about the destruc-

We have been criticized for behavior that should be criticized and cried foul like a child in time out, because it's not one of our own pointing the finger. With this growing superficiality has come waning activism. No wonder we can't be taken seriously. We've exposed our most prominent dark secrets to the predator and taken large doses of narcotics to kill the sound of their laughter.

How then do we respond to the ex-gays? In the same tone with which they lull our numbers to their side, we need to listen to their preaching and respond in a reasonable, calm voice. . . .

Rev. Mel White once observed that Christians have a history for shooting their wounded. Are we to do the same for those joining or leaving the ex-gay movement? Can we keep our family together and accept everyone no matter what their religious convictions? Can we accept the fact that the ex-gay movement will never fizzle out and disappear? Can we respect those who believe differently, learn from their success, and assimilate the principles of their new practices into our own? If we are ever to make a convincing argument against the ex-gay movement, we're going to need a lot more warmth and a lot more maturity. *Chalupa is a poet.*

Bill Taylor

When I arrived, I was sent to an area for bags and briefcases to be checked. They said they were checking for leaflets. When they opened mine, they saw my mother's old Bible with all her markings on all pages, and they immediately said, "Well, you're OK."

Walking down the aisle, I saw a seat on the end and asked if it was being saved for someone. The young lady (in her early 40s maybe—young to me) said no. After I sat down, I said, "I have a gay son. What brings you here?" She told me she had a daughter who was married for six years, then came out to her husband and her family that she was a lesbian. The couple had two children, and she had helped the father get custody of the children. Now two years later, her youngest son came to her and said that he was gay.

This new struggle has led her to have second thoughts about her daughter. I began to tell her of my experiences and what I had learned over a period of years and particularly how much help PFLAG had been to Violet and I. I invited her to PFLAG. She is an Evangelical Christian and is really torn. After one speech was finished, the audience stood for an ovation. She and her friend and I were about the only ones not standing.

That spoke louder than her words. As we walked out together, I said, "Call your daughter and try to build a new bridge to her. You will be glad you did."

During the break, I decided to go out for some fresh air. Not far outside was a group of maybe nine or 10 young people. I heard one say, "God help me, I don't believe I can stay here for the whole day." I turned to him and asked if he was having a hard time listening to the message. I told him I was having the same problems. As it turned out, most of them knew each other or someone in the group. They did not come together, but found each other. Each one it seems was pressured into attending by a loved one, a



mother, a father, an aunt, etc. They really did not want to be there. . . .

The highlight of my day came as I was leaving the parking lot. As I was backing out, there were 80 to 100 young people standing on the median, protesting. I pointed to my back bumper. They did not understand, so I got out and said that I was pointing to my PFLAG bumper sticker. When they saw it, one young, cute little girl came running and hugged my neck and said, "I am a PFLAG scholarship recipient." I got a few tears in my eyes.

As I left, I had to turn back toward town going past the group the other direction. All were cheering and waving. *Taylor is a former PFLAG Houston president.*

Sue Null

One man e-mailed me that he would not be able to come to the protest, but that he wanted to help and he offered to have signs made. OK, I said, and gave him some suggestions. Out of his own pocket,

he paid for four banners: "Stop Spiritual Violence," "Ignorance and Bigotry are not Christian Values," and "For the Truth, see pflag.org."

When he delivered them to me, I looked at this gorgeous young blond man whom I had never seen before and immediately decided he was gay—of course. But then, during conversation, he mentioned his "wife." His wife? How was that possible? So I asked what was up. He said he was a straight man, but that he attended a church that had

spoken out against gays and he was angry. His sister was lesbian. So he decided not to pay his tithe money for one month and to use that money to pay for banners for our protest. I was dumbfounded. . . .

The small PFLAG business cards and a moment of thoughtlessness were my personal undoing. I foolishly had slipped some undisguised PFLAG brochures into my book bag before checking into the conference. When the bag was searched at the security check-in, the darned brochures were way too obvious. I was told that they couldn't be brought into the conference. I tried to play innocent and said that a friend had given them to me and immediately took them back to the car. But that was enough for their security forces to be on the alert. I felt them constantly watching me. And it wasn't only I who had started out the morning badly, but several other infiltrators, who also felt observed, overheard, felt like Big Brother was watching over them. The atmosphere was very oppressive.



Sue Null

At the mid-morning break, I noticed the conference organizers staring at me and talking among themselves. Then one came up and told me I had to leave. I was dumbfounded, because I hadn't done anything to transgress—yet. I demanded to know why, and he wouldn't give me a reason, just insisting that I had to leave or he would call the police. I begged to stay, saying that I had come to learn, but his mind was made up. I knew that if he called the police and requested

that I leave in front of the police that I would have to go or be arrested.

As he was removing my armband, and almost pushing me out the door, an angry woman came up with one of the PFLAG business cards, which had been found in a bathroom stall and complained that I was trying to destroy their conference. It was assumed that I had left the cards, which wasn't the case. One of my co-infiltrators had done so. But they weren't interested in the truth. I was declared guilty and had to leave. I asked for my registration fee back, and \$50 was immediately thrust into my hand as the door closed behind me. . . .

Null is a PFLAG activist. She and her husband Jim were honorary grand marshals for the 2004 Pride parade.

Jeffry Downs

There were 150 people at the protest! I had no idea there would be such a turnout. It was fantastic to see that many people, especially since about half of them were non-gay supporters. There were even a couple of ministers in cleric's collars carrying signs. The most surprising thing, however, were the honking of horns and waves in support from truck drivers, Metro bus drivers, and good ol' boys in pick up trucks. . . .

Of course, on the down side, there could have been a lot more members of our community out there. Houston has a very dynamic and diverse GLBT culture, but as the gay community goes, it is also a very complacent one. None of the guys you see in the bars were there—and certainly no members of the A-list I so often hear about, this mythical elite group of gay men here in Houston. We've come a long way in Houston, but as a community we have a long, long way to go.

Downs is a writer who has contributed to OutSmart.

ON THE WEB

Read more
Love Won Out coverage at
www.outsmartmagazine.com.

THE INSIDER

In our February issue, we published D.L. Groover's detailed report from the 2003 Love Won Out conference in Austin ("Love Lost"). Read it at www.outsmartmagazine.com.

LookOut

by Tim Brookover



ARTFULLY DRESSED. Jeff River Law models a dupioni silk kimono created by Darla Hartmann, one of the objects of wearable art and accessories on display during Bali Hi Night in the Heights at Indian Summer Lodge, the whimsical retail compound that Law opened in December. The April 23 catered dinner and trunk show will feature works by a dozen artisans as well as music by The Lost Boys. Indian Summer Lodge houses October Gallery, Law's popular craft emporium previously located on 19th Street in the Heights. *PHOTO BY YVONNE FEECE*

GOOD WORKS. The Lambda Center, home to meetings of AA and other addiction-recovery groups, holds a fundraising carwash on April 9 at the center on West Clay, **John Hubert** reports.

Also April 9, Open Hearts for His Health will raise funds for medical treatment for **Kyle Dean**, the 11-year-old son of community activists **Michelle Dean** and **Kelly Gilbert**. Kyle suffers from kidney disease. The event at 1415 California will feature live entertainment.

Get your glam on for the Houston Transgender Unity Banquet on April 16.

The sequins and spangles and heels come out of the closet for this annual event, easily one of the best dressed of the year. **Annie Parker**, our city controller (and *OutSmart* columnist) is keynote speaker. Some proceeds support the **Peggy Rudd** Transgender Scholarship Fund.

On the same night, the Houston chapter of the Susan G. Komen Breast Cancer Foundation hosts the Pink Tie Gala at the InterContinental to mark its 15th year. Last September, we profiled **Janet Baker** ["Out-Front"], one of our community who is active with the foundation.

IN YOUR NEIGHBORHOOD.

Calling all Madonna wannabes: **Jeff Shell**, owner of Neal Hamil Agency, and Neiman Marcus host an April 7 makeup show by **Gina Brooke**, personal makeup artist to Midge, at the Galleria store. The event is the launch for the Shu Uemura spring line.

Jennifer Decker and **Bob Morgan** direct...for those who live in cities, an adaptation of Bertolt Brecht poetry presented by dos chicas theater commune at Southmore House, April 8-30. Reservations: 832/283-0858, dccommune@yahoo.com.

The art project Milestones for Peace remains on display at Brandon Home Furnishings through April 31. Since 1999, artists, political leaders, and celebrities have used stones as the basis for works of art that express the hope for world peace. **Jennifer Gee**, who is working with the exhibition in Houston, said works by 10 local artists will join the traveling show before it departs.

Kay Dayus recently sent an e-mail about the East Montrose Civic Association Home and Art Studio Tour on April 9. In addition to the six residences featured, several artists in the neighborhood—among them, **Gerida Mauldin**, **Janet Ritter**, and **Joan Son**—will open their spaces for the tour.

As the new coordinator for the Rainbow Fishing Club, **Lee Sirois** leads her first deep-sea fishing trip from Galveston on April 23 aboard the *New Buccaneer*.

Our own gay cowboy, **Gene Mikulenska**, is guest emcee for "Out West," the April 23 Houston Pride Band concert at Resurrection Metropolitan Community Church.

Kyle Fu and **David Kendall** welcome entries by May 1 for the first Houston Underground Film Festival. The fest is set for June 10-19 at their new Houston Production Studios in the Heights (formerly Mercury Studios). Info: houstonproductionstudios@yahoo.com

JB Hughes and **Flo Perry** are seeking singers for the Bayou City Women's Chorus, a new sister group to the Gay Men's Chorus of Houston. Perry recently revealed that the fledgling chorale hopes to present an inaugural performance in June for Pride month.

If you are of a certain age, you probably once shook your groove thing at the Copa. Well, dust off those that disco ball. Bocados co-owner **Terry Flores** has announced plans for a Copa reunion bash at the restaurant in May.

ON THE ROAD. On April 23, **Gerald Ennis** and **Sol Lara** lead a team of Mon-trose Softball League folks on a bus trip to Harrah's Casino in Lake Charles. Ka-ching! ■

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Yoko Ono

(Girlfriends, 4/05, Jenny Egan)

Jenny Egan: Your remix "Every Man Has a Man/Every Woman Has a Woman" hit number one on the dance charts this year. You've had a string of dance hits over the last couple years.

Yoko Ono: It's great because "Every Man" is not just a song. People support the principle of the thing. People supporting it are not just gays, but straights too, or it couldn't have been number one. That feels fantastic.

When I wrote the original song ["Every Man Has a Woman Who Loves Him"], John [Lennon] and I were very angry about the Vietnam War. That's the way we expressed ourselves. We made statements that way, and we found that songwriting was a better way to express things.

When the Bush administration started to say they wanted to change the Constitution [with an amendment against gay marriage], I was outraged again. I'm a rebel. Since I'm an outsider and I've had to cope with racism and sexism all my life, I am sensitive to unfairness and injustice. There are many gays who don't want to get married, so that's not what it was about. It has to do with human rights.

Jake Shears

(lead singer of Scissor Sisters)

(Out, 4/05, Matthew Breen)

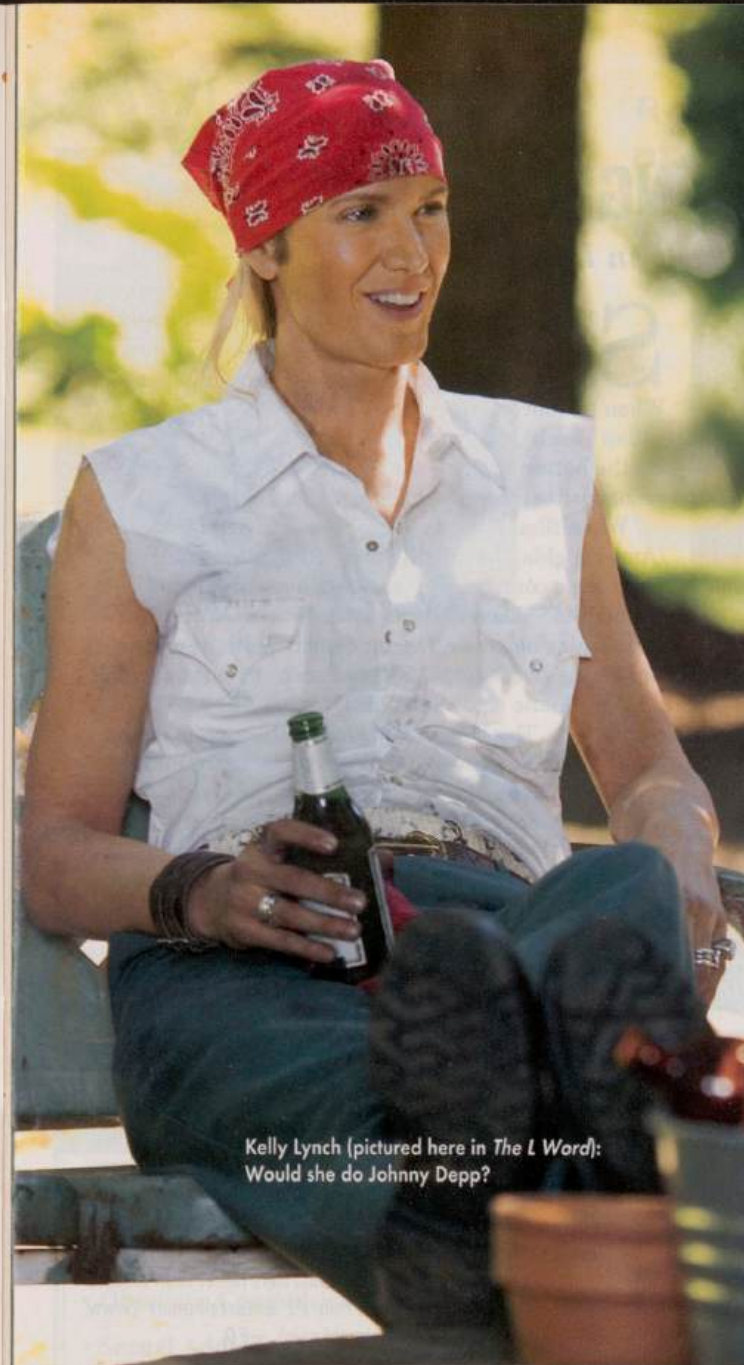
Shears's sex life has recently been Internet gossip fodder. When I referred to an online article hinting that certain closeted A-list celebs were shaking in their boots because they thought Shears might publicly announce he's bedded them, he was surprised. "Where did you read that? Ha!" he says. "Well, let's just say that it's not my place to out anyone. There are plenty, plenty of closeted guys out there. If you're a pop star or an actor, you're gay! You have to be gay to even want to do it in the first place. We're born entertainers. It's natural, like being a flight attendant. If they all came out, it would totally change the world."

Stacy Keach and David Keith

10 YEARS AGO
THIS MONTH

(Entertainment Weekly, 4/14/95, Ken Tucker)

Thank goodness *Texas* [a four-hour 1995 TV movie] is also populated by a couple of real-life characters portrayed by overacting pros: Stacy Keach as Sam Houston . . . and David Keith as Jim Bowie. . . . In one of their first meetings, Keach and Keith are forced into some homoerotic dialogue unusual for TV-movie fare. Houston coyly asks Bowie to pull that blade out of his pants, because "I want to see if it's a big as everyone says it is." When Bowie obliges (we're not shown the steel, just a shot of Keach looking into Keith's lap), Houston murmurs, "That's big—can I hold it?"



Kelly Lynch (pictured here in *The L Word*):
Would she do Johnny Depp?

Kelly Lynch

(Girlfriends, 4/05, Heather Findlay)

Heather Findlay: What's the difference between playing gay in 1993 [Lynch played gay in *Three of Hearts*] and now [as Ivan, Lynch's character on Showtime's *The L Word*]?

Kelly Lynch: Everything. For one thing, you have every girl in Hollywood battling to do a guest spot on *The L Word*.

Even Sharon Osbourne and Arianna Huffington.

It kills me. I've got more response about Ivan from straight women and gay men than I would have assumed. [I think it's because] Ivan is very evolved. I wanted to create a character who is undeniable. When I read the script, I said, This is great, but here's the deal—you have to make me really handsome, because you can't make Kit [Pam Grier's character], who's straight, make too much of a leap. Let's do Johnny Depp.

Queer Quotes

Compiled by Blase DiStefano

Scott Witman & Marc Shaiman

(Entertainment Weekly, 3/11/05)

According to Entertainment Weekly, "The Tony- and Grammy-winning team of Marc Shaiman and Scott Witman [openly gay partners] created a satirical song for Oscar presenter Robin Williams to perform [at the recent Oscars ceremony.] But when network watchdogs had a problem with the humor, the piece was pulled from the show."

Recently, a group protested to Congress their suspicions that beloved animated figure *SpongeBob SquarePants* is gay, due to his inclusion in a video promoting tolerance. We have just received a telegram of their further findings . . .

Pinocchio's had his nose done/Sleeping Beauty is popping pills/The Three Little Pigs ain't kosher/Betty Boop works Beverly Hills.

Superman is on steroids/Tinky Winky is in the pink/Dammit to hell/Wake up and smell/The stink beneath the ink!/Chip 'n' Dale both are strippers/Scrooge McDuck is really tight/Bugs Bunny's a sexaholic/And Snow White has been up all night!

There's something fishy 'bout Nemo/Batman and Robin share a sink/Winnie the Pooh/We know what he's into/The stink beneath the ink.

Fred Flintstone is dyslexic/Jessica Rabbit is really a man/Olive Oyl is anorexic/And Casper is in the Ku Klux Klan.

Cinderella's into identity theft/Pocahontas is addicted to craps/Dumbo's an overeater/Josie and the Pussycats dance on laps.

It's clear the Road Runner's hooked on speed/Charlie Brown is seeing a shrink/People of America, take a whiff/Smoekey the Bear just lit a spliff!/Tom & Jerry are dating 'N Sync.

Oh the stink . . ./Beneath the ink! (Don't blink!)/The ink! (The kink!)/The stink beneath the ink!



At the 57th Annual Tony Awards (June 8, 2003, CBS), Scott Witman (l) and Marc Shaiman shared a Tony and a lip-lock. What did they share with Robin Williams on the recent Oscar telecast?

COWBOYS & ANGELS

Super Fly meets Queer Eye with an Irish brogue



Just roommates? Allen Leech (l) and Michael Legge star in *Cowboys & Angels*.

Shane Butler (Michael Legge) is a handsome but awkwardly nerdy 20-year-old looking to lose his dull desk job and pursue the life of an artist. When he moves into an apartment with Vincent Cusak (Allen Leech), a gay fashion student, life takes a turn for the better. Despite the fact that the two are diametric opposites, they become fast friends.

When Shane meets Vincent's best friend Gemma (Amy Shields), he falls in love with her, but the desire for change continues. Shane needs money, lots of it. Enter Keith (David Murray), Shane and Vincent's downstairs neighbor. A drug dealer, Keith assures Shane the two can make a mad score in Dublin, which Shane refuses, at first.

The Dublin run works, the money is huge, and Shane enlists Vincent to metro him up. Shane blossoms from grotty to stylin'. But unbeknownst to Shane, some sketchy Dubliners are onto him and are casing Casa de Shane y Vincent. • 2003. Written and directed by David Gleeson. • From TLA Releasing (www.tlareleasing.com).

—Eric Dieckman

MORE DVD/VHS PREVIEWS

The Brady Bunch: The Complete First Season

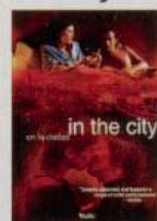
It's the story... of a series about an iconic reconstituted family. The series went from being popular to setting a standard in family television formula to being a source of camp in less than three decades. What's so ironic, however, is this ideal gigantic family so adored by the Christian right had a father played by an actor (Robert Reed) who stayed in the closet almost till his death from colon cancer complicated by AIDS. Reed and his family made their mark. Here are their first 25 episodes. • From Paramount Home Entertainment (www.paramount.com/homeentertainment). —ED

South Park: The Complete Fifth Season

The feisty tykes from the tiny, backward mountain town are at it again. Never shying away from any topic, the fifth season includes a couple of homophobic episodes. In "Cripple Fight," Big Gay Al is fired from his position as Scoutmaster for being gay. "Butters' Very Own Episode" reveals Butters' deep, dark family secret about his dad's late night "shopping spree." While searching for his dad, Butters meanders through porn theaters and gay bathhouses on his way home so he can join his folks for their anniversary

dinner at Bennigan's. The three-DVD set also holds the infamous "It Hits the Fan" episode, wherein "shit" is said 162 times. There's even a counter to help you keep track. • From Paramount Home Entertainment (www.paramount.com/homeentertainment). —ED

In the City



Set in Barcelona, this sexy Spanish romantic comedy focuses on a group of friends who share secrets and secret passions. None are happy with their marriages or the state of their romantic lives, leading each into adultery, flings, physical relationships-of-convenience, bisexual experimentation, and a potential statutory lawsuit. • FYI: Eduard Fernandez, who plays the architect Mario, won the Spanish Goya Award for Best Supporting Actor. • 2003. Directed by Cesc Gay. Spanish with English subtitles. • Available April 19 from Wolfe Video (www.WolfeVideo.com). —ED

The Sonny & Cher Ultimate Collection



If you still haven't had a strong enough Cher fix with her spectacular farewell tour, there's hope. In addition to the '70s musical variety show, there's the 1969 pilot from the *Barbara McNair Show*, karaoke, each of Cher's #1 solo hits, commentary from Cher re-

corded during her Farewell tour, guest appearances by Michael Jackson, Tina Turner, Donny & Marie, Burt Reynolds, Farrah Fawcett, and all the '70s pop icons. And don't forget Sonny's Pizza. Keep an eye out for appearances by daughter Chastity, dressed to match her mom. (Now a lesbian activist, she hated being dressed that way and would have rather been dressed like her dad.) • From R2 Entertainment (www.respond2entertainment.com). —ED

Elektra



Elektra (Jennifer Garner) is a hard-core, mysterious, and sexy action hero fighting the ultimate battle between good and evil. Armed with a blood lust, formidable martial arts skill, and an uncanny ability to see visions of the future, she becomes a ruthless assassin on a downward spiral into darkness... but she meets up with a last chance for redemption that will either save her soul or destroy her. She died once before and was restored to life; will she have the strength to make her second chance count? • Gay content? The much ballilyhoed kiss between Elektra and Typhoid Mary (Natassia Malthe) is not the least bit sexy; in fact, the purpose of the kiss is to kill Elektra. However, we're always thrilled to watch women kick ass... and Elektra kicks ass. • 2005. Directed by Rob Bowman. • From Fox Home Entertainment (www.foxhome.com). —Suzie Lynde

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DARK AT THE BOTTOM OF THE STAIRS

Novelist Michael Peterson's bisexuality comes into play in *The Staircase*



Michael Peterson's marriage and private life are at the center of the trial where he is accused of murdering his wife Kathleen.

The *Staircase* delves into the mystery surrounding the death of Kathleen Peterson, a Nortel executive who was married to novelist Michael Peterson. On the night of Decem-

ber 9, 2001, an agitated Michael Peterson called 911 and told the operator that he found his wife, unconscious but still breathing, at the bottom of the stairs. When the police arrived, they found

Kathleen lying dead in a pool of blood and began treating the home as a crime scene. One week later, Michael Peterson was charged with first-degree murder.

In eight tautly structured chapters, *The Staircase* takes viewers inside an unpredictable real-life drama, as Peterson's sons and adopted daughters rally to his defense and his legal team prepares to battle the prosecution. Meanwhile, Durham's district attorney and his assistant build a case that will put the Peterson marriage—and Michael Peterson's private life—at the center of the trial. Says director Jean-Xavier de Lestrade, "It is obvious that if the wealthy, famous, white writer Michael Peterson hadn't been bisexual, the case would never have come to court."

Every Monday in April, two different episodes air on Sundance Channel at 8 p.m. Episodes will replay in April on Tuesdays at 10 p.m., Thursdays at 7 p.m., and Sundays at 1 p.m. The first four episodes will also air back-to-back on Friday, April 15, starting at 7 p.m., and the last four will air Friday April 29, starting at 7 p.m. All eight episodes will air on Sunday May 1, beginning at 1 p.m. For more info or to confirm schedule: www.sundancechannel.com.

COURTESY SUNDANCE CHANNEL

IF YOU MISSED THEM THE FIRST TIME OR IF YOU'VE NEVER SEEN THEM . . .



Soldier's Girl "Three outstanding performances" (*San Francisco Chronicle*) by Troy Garity (pictured far left), Lee Pace (far right), and Shawn Hatosy (center) highlight this Emmy- and Golden Globe-nominated drama, based on the true story of a young American Army private who was murdered for having a romantic relationship with a transgendered club performer. With sensitivity and passion, director Frank Pierson and openly gay screenwriter Ron Nyswaner (*Philadelphia*) tell a moving and tragic story of forbidden love against the background of the military's current "Don't Ask, Don't Tell" policy. • Airs on Showtime Showcase on April 10 at 7 p.m., the 19th at 12:30 a.m., the 23rd at 10:45 p.m., and the 27th at 8:30 p.m. To confirm schedule: www.sho.com.



Prey for Rock 'n' Roll On the brink of turning 40, the lead singer of a struggling all-girl punk band faces the prospect of being a marginal, middle-aged rocker. Director Alex Steyermark presents a rare, realistic depiction of the day-to-day lives of musicians bypassed by rock 'n' roll fame and glory. Holding center stage is a high-voltage performance by Gina Gershon (pictured), playing the strutting, tattooed, bisexual balladeer Jacki. • Airs on Showtime on April 23 at 8:45 p.m. and the 27th at 7 p.m., and on Showtime Too on the 29th at 8 p.m. To confirm schedule: www.sho.com. ■

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Out in the Arts

by Tim Brookover

VALLEY HIGH

*A college in Cy-Fair, of all places,
brings a celluloid camp classic to the stage*

You know you love *Valley of the Dolls*—the 1967 show-biz melodrama ripped from the splendidly tawdry Jackie Susann novel. Who would expect this glamorously wicked tale to end up on stage not in Montrose, but at a community college in Cypress, of all reddest of red locales? But theater vet Ron Jones, who is Cy-Fair College faculty, knows camp gold. So before you, like Neely, can cry “I want a doll! I want a doll!” *Dolls* opens in the 'burbs. (In case your queer card was revoked: *Dolls* are the pills Neely craves.)

Principal among the likely pleasures is sure to be Sylvia Froman, the savvy comic actress who isn't afraid to chew some scenery, in the role of savage diva Helen Lawson. We can't wait to hear her bite off Susann's marvelous, tacky lines (“The only hit that comes out of a Helen Lawson show is Helen Lawson, and that's me, baby, remember?”)

Valley of the Dolls,
April 21, 22, 23, 29, 30.
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Dolls house: Alissa Simmons (l-r), Mincy Nguyen, Bethany Murphrey, and Sylvia Froman pose on the Cy-Fair College stage. Murphrey and Nguyen wear Bob Mackie gowns from the director's collection.

PHOTO BY STEVEN DAVID

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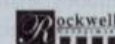


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LEA ROCKS

DeLaria jazzes up some new tunes on Double Standards



If you liked Lea DeLaria's celebrated 2001 jazz vocal debut disc *Playin' It Cool* and anxiously awaited her next foray into jazz vocals, your patience is about to be rewarded. *Double Standards* (Telarc), originally scheduled for a 2003 domestic release, has finally seen the light of day. Where DeLaria, best known for her stand-up comedy and acting

roles, previously reinterpreted the songs of Broadway with a jazz flair, she now turns her gaze to modern rock standards, including Green Day's "Longview" and Los Lobos' "Kiko and the Lavender Moon," reinventing them in ways few might have ever imagined.

I recently had the pleasure of speaking with DeLaria about her new album.

Gregg Shapiro: In recent years, people have become familiar with the saga of artists being badly mistreated by major labels. Patty Griffin comes to mind, as one. Like Patty Griffin, you have found a new home where your work is getting the attention it deserves.

Lea DeLaria: Well, that's very nice of you to say. Thank you.

Please say something about your experience with Warner Brothers and your subsequent relocation to Telarc.

The music industry is going through a state of flux right now, trying to deal with the free music on the Internet and all those sorts of things. It's not just my label. I mean, the state of jazz is in a real scary place, and the Warner jazz label just went under. There is no more Warner Jazz. It's gone. Those of us who were lucky enough to find another home are those of us who made money with our record. It's that simple. A lot of jazz records do not make money. New jazz does not make money. There are some artists out there who are making money. Most of them are cross-over appeal-type artists like Norah Jones, who is not a jazz singer. Let me take that back. She is a great jazz singer. She is just not doing jazz on her records. As far as I can tell from Norah Jones, the new jazz is country. [Laughs] →

GrooveOut Shorts

Erasure Nightbird



The new album from pop duo Andy Bell and Vince Clarke is filled with elegant arrangements and synth-pop romance tracks. With passive disco/electro-infused beats and melodies, Erasure unveils a set of intimate and introspective reflections on love and heartbreak. Andy Bell, who is openly gay, shows no desire of slowing down after publicly announcing his HIV status. Along with Vince Clarke's technical innovations, Erasure is back with another lavish production of soulful vocals and trademark synths. From Mute Records (www.mute.com). More info: www.erasureinfo.com. —Andrea Rodricks

Jim Verraros Rollercoaster

American Idol top-ten finalist Jim Verraros, who is openly gay, is releasing his newest album, *Rollercoaster*, a straightforward pop record sure to



Kristin Chenoweth As I Am

Blonde, wee, and adorable, Chenoweth is a hybrid: a powerhouse Broadway diva and a devoted Christian from the Bible Belt, who has performed twice at Carnegie Hall with the New York City Gay Men's Chorus ("which I'm an honorary member of, very proudly," she told *Playbill* last year). The Tony winner melds these disparate strains

please his followers. The music is driving and danceable, with strong beats and provocative lyrics. The slower numbers are soulful, displaying Verraros's suggestive vocals perhaps to greater effect than the fast



interview), including the old-time gospel "Just As I Am." When she flings her soprano to the rafters on "Upon This Rock," you know you have been churching, whatever your faith. Curiously, the CD concludes with the story song "Taylor, the Latte Boy," a charming concert favorite, which though chaste is definitely secular. From Sony Classical (www.sonyclassical.com). Info: www.kristinchenoweth.com. —Tim Brookover

Jennifer Lopez Rebirth



Poor J.Lo. She's probably never going to have an objective piece of journalism written about her for as long as she's under the glare of public lights. Whether it refers to her music, her →

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GrooveOut Shorts continued from page 56

acting, or her rampant engagements, everyone wants to take a shot. So, focusing strictly on the music, and not on the booty...um...ah, man I give up. You already know what this record is all about—more of the same, only with new hubby Marc Anthony as a guest this time. From Epic (www.epicrecords.com).

—Lance Scott Walker

Amy Farris Anyway



The Austin native will perform at McGonigal's Mucky Duck on April 23 in support of her solo debut CD. Produced by Grammy winner Dave Alvin (The Blasters), the disc is a winning mix of honky-tonk country, blues, and straight-ahead rock. Farris even covers "Undecided," a classic Brill Building ditty that was a hit for Ella Fitzgerald, Django Reinhardt, and other musical titans. Farris writes some of her own songs, including "No Exit," a rare pop tune that cites Jean Paul Sartre. From Yep Roc Records. Info: www.yeproc.com. —TB

Moby Hotel



The immensely talented Moby returns with another gem. *Hotel* may be his most personal and streamlined album yet, but it wouldn't be Moby without the progressive touch he's so famous for. His new release is accompanied with hotel-ambient, a beautiful collection of relaxing instrumentals. This is his first album without vocal samples. *Hotel* continues in Moby's tradition of beautifully eclectic records and includes instrumentals, downtempo beats, uplifting electro-disco, and sultry ballads. From V2 Records (www.v2records.co.jp). Info: www.mobyhotel.com. —AR

Tori Amos The Beekeeper



Tori Amos is back with a vengeance, having just released *The Beekeeper* after a hiatus of more than two years. *The Beekeeper* is a classic Tori concept album, boasting 19 tracks, grouped into a garden motif—weaving episodic tales about nature, the female spirit, and sexuality. Her most earthy and mature album so far, she adds authentic blues guitars, Afro-Cuban percussion, and gospel organ to her lilting piano style. She also conjures more grit and power in her voice than in previous works, delivering an intense, moody, and ecstatic vocal performance. This is Tori Amos at her most accessible; nevertheless, she doesn't entirely depart from her trademark ethereal melodies and obscure lyrics. *The Beekeeper* is a masterpiece of fascinating complexity—both ominous and sweet—perhaps her best album yet. From Epic Records (www.epicrecords.com). Info: www.toriamos.com. —Anna Pomeroy

Various Artists Verve Remixed 3



Verve opened its vaults to today's top producers and DJs and came up with yet another acclaimed collection of popular jazz remixes transformed into a modern hit infused with irresistible beats. The *Verve Remixed 3* album mixes the greatest jazz performers in the Verve catalog with dance grooves by some of the world's greatest DJs. Also check out the *Verve Unmixed 3* album for the original version of these songs. From Verve Music (www.ververemixed.com). —AR

Yo-Yo Ma Silk Road Journeys: Beyond the Horizon



The new release from this gifted soloist explores the rich cultural and artistic traditions of the Silk Road, the historic trade route that connected the peoples and traditions of Asia with those of Europe. The album includes works by Sandeep Das, and two of China's leading film composers. The music stimulates the imagination and evokes images of the nomadic people who traveled and lived along the Silk Road. Across an extensive range of releases Yo-Yo Ma remains one of the best-selling recording artists in the classical field. From Sony Classical (www.sonyclassical.com). Info: www.yo-yoma.com or www.silkroadproject.org. —AR

Various Artists Cinema: A Windham Hill Collection



Cinema: A Windham Hill Collection is a compilation of 12 classic movie themes spanning more than 60 years. As the first compilation of its kind for the label, *Cinema* is a collection of beloved themes interpreted by Windham Hill artists, achieving a delicate balance between interpretation and homage to the original work. The album contains familiar music from diverse films such as *The Graduate*, *Babe*, *Baghdad Café*, and more. The music is rendered in the well-known Windham Hill style: largely moody, lush, and soothing, most conducted at a stately pace; but the jazzy rendition of "Summer Knows" from *The Summer of '42* is a stand-out. From Windham Hill/Legacy (www.windham.com or www.legacyrecordings.com). —SL

Agnus Dei Reiki-1: Heaven's Gift & Reiki-2: Infinite Mind



The *Reiki-1: Heavens Gift* CD is intended for intuitive working Reiki practitioners, and with its continuous playtime of nearly 73 minutes encourages spending as much time as is needed in each body area to maximize energy flow. The waves and ocean sounds between each music selection act as a bridge that allows the energy to flow freely and gently lead to deep relaxation. Most Reiki recipients require a more →

GrooveOut continued from page 56

So those of us that did well were able to find homes. It took a little longer for me, and that was mostly because Telarc was trying to license the record from Warner Brothers, and they were being ridiculous. I'll say it out loud: Warner Brothers was being ri-di-cu-lous. Telarc can't even release in certain markets in Europe because WB did release me in certain markets in Europe, and they were asking for as much money as it cost to make the record. They wanted all theirs, but they had already made their money back. [Laughs] Finally, the person who was dealing with this, he was actually fired. I think that was the story, and a reasonable person took over who went, "Of course you can license Lea's record."

There was a fascinating article by Greg Kot in the *Chicago Tribune* recently about the way that music retailing has changed, particularly for older music buyers, and how Starbucks has become a force in that area. Kot used new CDs by Madeleine Peyroux and the late Ray Charles as examples. Would you like to see *Double Standards* for sale in Starbucks?

That would be fantastic, absolutely, and it's exactly the right market. I talked a little bit in the previous question about the state of jazz. I bring this up because I just recently was the featured vocalist for the 50th anniversary of the Newport Jazz Festival tour. This was a big-deal tour. We've got Cedar Walton, Lew Tabackin, Ken Peplowski. We've got huge names in jazz, and I'm looking out at the audience and it's *Cocoon 3*, baby! [Laughs] It's all alter cockers. [Laughs] The reality is that with this record, *Double Standards*, I am desperately trying to get people in jazz to realize that they can't just keep reinventing the same tunes over and over again. Jazz has changed. That's what Miles Davis and Charlie Parker were all about. This is the music of the college-age set, and we're swinging it. So the people who go to Starbucks are exactly the people that this record was made for. Are you kidding? That would be the greatest thing in the world!

When I interviewed you four years ago, at the time of the release of *Playin' It Cool*, I asked about what you had in mind for your next CD, and you said that you wanted "to do what we did with Broadway—to do the same with classic rock and roll." And that's what I've done.

However, in what I think is an even more inspired move, you set your sights on punk and modern rock, by revising songs by →

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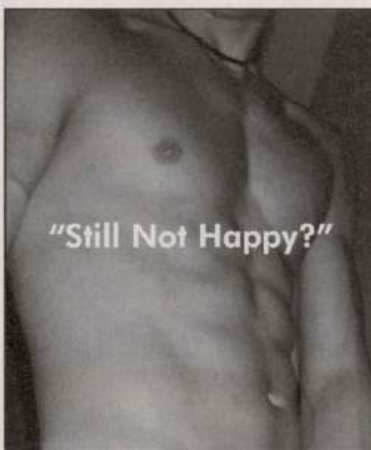
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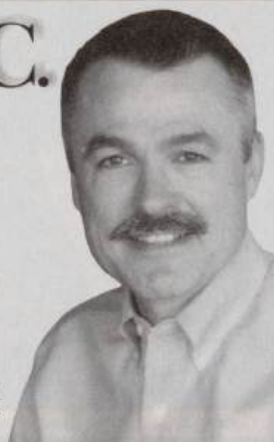
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GrooveOut Shorts

continued from page 58

individual approach than the usual 3-5 minute hand-position change; this CD enables practitioners and patients to focus more intensely for a longer period of time to bring about maximum benefits. • The Reiki-2: Infinite Mind CD is especially intended for Reiki practitioners at least of the second degree, and offers the benefit of sending Reiki energy over distances without having to use a clock. The CD offers two timed music blocks with 15 minutes and one with 20 minutes, both opening with five minutes of ocean sounds for a short inner focusing meditation at the start. From Indigo Music (www.indigomusic.at). —SL

Everything but the Girl Adapt or Die: Ten Years of Remixes



Everything But the Girl fans, rejoice! Adapt or Die is the first-ever, full-length CD containing songs from this seminal group, remixed by a stable of talented DJs and producers. Overseen by vocalist Tracy Thorn and multi-instrumentalist Ben Watt, the artists on Adapt or Die explore this group's influential electronic pop, bringing to their music a future sensibility, while remaining true to the essence of the original material. No small accomplishment, since Everything But the Girl has been a favorite in clubs and with critics since the '80s. This duo was at the forefront of the electronic-music revolution, and their sound has become iconic to the genre. • Thorn's haunting vocals are timeless, and they shine through these new musical treatments, delivering this group's sense of lovely melancholy and profound tales of individuals adrift and isolated in an overwhelmingly urban landscape. Among the outstanding tracks are DJ Jazzy Jeff's interpretation of "Mirrorball" and Jay Sealee's modern house remix of "Lullaby of Clubland" that (dare I say it) rival or perhaps improve on the originals. Unlike many remix discs, Adapt or Die shows a deep respect for Thorn and Watt's unique spirit, and feels less like a re-imagining of their work than an evolution of it. From Warner Strategic Marketing (www.wmg.com). —AP

3 Speaker High 3 Speaker High



3 Speaker High is the self-titled debut album of Gabrielle Kaye and Robert K. Rodriguez (aka DJ Rob Keith). This release follows upon the success of their singles "Make Me Dance All Night" and "Have a Good Time," which have been climbing the dance charts since January. 3 Speaker High further delves into mixing elements of electronica, soul, and rock, blending disparate music genres with solid lyrics and melodies. The outcome is an album alive with music you can both listen and dance to, contrasting influences woven seamlessly into a unique fusion and energy. Another novel feature is the subtle but strong male voices—a refreshing departure from the female "diva"-driven vocals so often heard on the dance floor. From PAS Entertainment (www.pasentertainment.com). Info: www.3speakerhigh.com. —AP →

GrooveOut

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No Doubt, The Pretenders, Patti Smith, and Los Lobos, to name a few. Can you say something about that?

Yeah, to me those are classic rock tunes, because that's my rock era. I didn't grow up in the '60s with that kind of rock, so that's why I wanted to do those tunes. I wanted to do tunes that people knew and reinvent them in such a way that I know people that are halfway through the Pretenders song on there and then finally realize it's a Pretenders song. They're listening to it going, "It sounds so familiar. Oh, my God, that's the Pretenders." It's fantastic, really great.

People will know the music, and in some ways sing along. The "Just a Girl" one, I know every gay man hears that and just goes nuts. That's the quintessential gay favorite. "Call Me" seems to be the one that really swings. It was getting airplay in Europe. Also Neil Young's "Philadelphia" gets a lot of airplay, so we'll see what happens in America with that.

I'm glad that you mentioned that, because I tear up ever time I listen to your reading of "Philadelphia." People always focused on Springsteen's Oscar-winning "Streets of Philadelphia," which is a good song, but I always preferred the Young tune. Can you tell me why you chose to cover it?

Please, Springsteen's doesn't even remotely... With all due respect to people who like him, he is nowhere near the musician that Neil Young is. That's a real song, that's a truly gorgeous song, and it was a pleasure to do that song. And to have Stephon Harris playing vibes on it is such a gift. He is such a brilliant musician. When I do that live now, I do it with just a bass and piano and the bass is arcing, it plays with the bow. It's really lovely. It comes across beautifully live. I'm really happy with it.

Soundgarden had one pretty song in their repertoire...

[Laughs]

And "Black Hole Sun" was it. You took it and made it even prettier. What was it about that song that appealed to you?

I just think it's the anthem of that era of rock. That's why we chose it. You can't do college rock tunes without doing "Black Hole Sun."

How did you select Soundgarden over, say, Nirvana or Pearl Jam?

We did do a Nirvana tune that didn't make it on the disc, but that doesn't mean it won't make it out in another form. I know it has been pitched to a couple television shows and things like that.

You also enhanced the funky vibe of Jane's Addiction's "Been Caught Stealing," and you even left the genders of the original song intact. Is that important to you?

I always sing the lyrics. It's not about the singer. It's about the song. I've always felt that. Whatever song I sing, I always leave the gender intact. So if the song is sung to a woman, I'm singing it to a woman. If the song is sung to man, I'll sing it to a man. It's just my personal choice, and it always has been.

One of the luxuries of not singing American songbook standards on this disc is that you are performing songs by living songwriters. Have you gotten any feedback from them regarding your renditions of their songs?

I have, actually. The "Been Caught Stealing" feedback is actually unbelievable. They were talking about putting me on the Lollapalooza tour, and then it went. I'm telling you, I'm cursed. [Laughs] I got a lovely little note from Deborah Harry, which basically said that she was jealous—that she wished she had thought of doing it for her jazz record, which was really nice. I am curious to hear what Chrissie Hynde will say about "Tattooed Love Boy."

Or Patti Smith.

Of "Dancing Barefoot"? Please, I am the biggest Patti Smith fan of all time. You have no idea what a huge Patti Smith fan I am. I still listen to her all the time.

I know it's my record so I can say it, but it really swings like mad. The woman who arranged it, Mary Ann McSweeney, who is a bass player I use quite often, did it as a tribute to Charles Mingus—sort of a take-off on a really famous baseline of his, "The Haitian Fight Song." It works really well with the tune. I'm very pleased with it. This particular record, more than the last one, looks at a variety of styles of jazz. There's fusion of this record, there is weird music, total swing, funk. These are the sounds of jazz.

In addition to the new disc, are there any upcoming movie, television, or Broadway musical appearances in the works?

Absolutely. I am currently in an off-Broadway show. I am doing Samuel Beckett's *Happy Days* at the Classic Stage Company.



It's a really weird play... Well, it's Beckett. That's the one where the woman is buried up to her waist in the first act in the mound and then buried up to her neck in a mound in the second act, and it's a comedy. [Laughs] I am very pleased with it. There are three musicals in the pipe. One is a musical

based on the relationship between Lorena Hickock and Eleanor Roosevelt, and it's all three characters: Franklin, Eleanor, and Lorena. It's a lovely little piece. It's brand new. There is a piece called *The Drowsy Chaperone*, which is set to go to Broadway next season that I'm in. Another piece, called *Alley Cats*, which is supposedly going to have me and Lily Tomlin, and that's going to be in Vancouver at the end of the year.

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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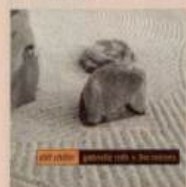
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GrooveOut Shorts continued from page 60

Gabrielle Roth + The Mirrors *Still Chillin'*



Still Chillin' is ambient music meets drum circle meets Eastern-flavored spirituality. In addition to being a theater/music director, Gabrielle Roth has spent her life exploring the ecstatic experience in dance and healing movement. Roth and her tribe of musicians have released their 19th CD, comprised of four tracks of New Age/ambient textures blended with percussion and random vocal explorations and chants. More rhythm-heavy than harmonic, this album is reminiscent of a trancey Cirque de Soleil-sans-melody. *Still Chillin'* could be the soundtrack for your next vision quest. From Raven Recording (www.ravenrecording.com). —AP

DJ Roland Belamres *Party Groove: Winter Party, Volume 8*



DJ Roland Belamres mixes this latest CD of the annual Winter Party in Miami Beach. This disc is a high-energy, fresh compilation of upbeat, vocal-driven dance music capturing the local flavors of South Beach and the essence of this event. Skillfully blending pop anthems with dynamic grooves, DJ Roland describes his mix as an

"uplifting journey." The Winter Party is under new direction by the National Gay and Lesbian Task Force and is poised to solidify itself as a top fundraising event. From Centaur Music (www.centaurmusic.com). —AP

DJ Paulo *Party Groove: Fireball, Volume 3*



This disc sports a high-energy compilation of tracks by well-known and hot new artists mixed by DJ Paulo, the featured DJ for the closing party, Flame, held at Crobar Chicago. *Fireball* kicks off with a deep, ominous voice proclaiming, "And now the drums will take you..."—and they do. *Fireball* is aptly named for the scorching beats and aggressive vocals DJ Paulo blends into a rhythmic assault on your senses. There is no fluff or pretense here, only raw, tribal grooves and searing melodies. The *Fireball* event and CDs benefit Chicago's Hearts Foundation, a nonprofit group supporting fundraising efforts for Chicago's GLBT community and HIV/AIDS service organizations. From Centaur Music (www.centaurmusic.com). —AP

Various Artists
Mayfield Remixed: The Curtis Mayfield Collection
Fans of this late soul singer/songwriter, beware: If you don't like house music, you won't find anything of worth on this disc. Curtis Mayfield's music was the element of strength, wisdom, and oppression for decades until his death in 1999. This remix collection, which features a Grandmaster Flash



remix, falls short of doing any of his songs justice, with the possible exception of Ashley Beedle's re-edit of "Do Do Wap Is Strong in Here," a fine recreation of a classic that doesn't compromise its integrity, but still adds a little flair. From Rhino (www.rhino.com). —LSW

MUSIC DVD Tina Turner *All the Best—The Live Collection DVD*



Everyone discovers Tina Turner eventually. And whether as a product of her early days with Ike, her gathering momentum in the '70s, or her absolute explosion in the '80s, we all found a way to like Tina. With her continuing steps in the mid-'90s, she has cemented a career for herself that transcends generations. This collection captures that perfectly—a series of timeless live performances from all points in her career, featuring brilliant duos with Bryan Adams and David Bowie, as well as a blistering performance of "We Don't Need Another Hero" from the 1985 film *Mad Max Beyond Thunderdome*, which was my first exposure to her. If you haven't discovered Tina yet—you will. From Capitol (www.officialtina.com). —LSW

Read more GrooveOut Shorts at
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SARAH, NOT PLAIN, NOT TALL

For National Poetry Month, wordsmith Sarah Crowder checks in

This month marks the 10th celebration of National Poetry Month, inaugurated by the Academy of American Poets. To observe the annual occasion, we checked in with Sarah Crowder. Fellow poet Aaron Coleman, who is completing work on his e-book Volume NeXt, recently sat down and chatted with the diminutive Crowder, a steadfast straight ally as well as a favorite poet in the community (she also contributed to the People to Watch coverage in our January issue). One of her poems follows.



Suddenly, Sarah: "I've recently begun writing a comedy-horror novel with the working title *Houston Sucks*," says poet Sarah Crowder.

I'm originally from the Midwest, but I've been in Texas long enough to lose the clipped, nasal accent of my native people. I studied the performing arts in college (music, specifically opera, and theater), and owned my own theater company very briefly. I've written fiction since I was 10 or 11, but I started dabbling in poetry just a few years ago. I've always resisted being called a poet, because I maintain that I am just a prose writer who learned to make clever line breaks.

I currently host the open mic poetry night at Helios on the fourth Wednesday of every month. A couple of years ago, I wrote a series of performance monologues called *Dating Monsters*. I performed the best of the series, "Wallflower," in a spotlight performance at Helios

last spring. I was the primary voice actress for KPFT's Radio Theatre for a year, as well as a writer for the show, and I'm currently working on my first short film, which should be completed in late spring. I've also recently begun writing a comedy-horror novel with the working title *Houston Sucks*.

My first chapbook of poetry (*The Turnip Made Me Do It*) came out in July 2002, and last year I edited a zine that used only pseudonyms called *Zombies & Kittens* with another Houston poet, E. K. Keith. My pseudonym was Apocrypha Jones. I currently serve on the

board of directors of The Panhandler, a nonprofit organization that will produce its first poetry quarterly next month [available at Taft Street Coffee, Helios, and various local bookstores; find more information at www.thepanhandler.org].

I do prefer comedy to the dire "my dead kitten" school of poetry, but even my most humorous pieces contain some cultural criticism or emotional truth that the audience can share. And I do slip up and get serious from time to time.

As for my personal life, I keep it as secret as possible so no one can figure out that I

don't have a personal life. Between all of my artistic projects and working 50 hours a week as the office manager for three restaurants, there's not much time left over for anything else.

I guess, all in all, I really want to be the first pin-up girl of poetry.

Tablecloth

You would think from the sheer amount
of emotion I have for you
That some of it would spill over
And stain you
Like tea on a tablecloth

But you are
A pristine, bleached white

I'm overflowing
And you remain untouched

ON THE WEB: Read two additional Sarah Crowder poems at www.outsmartmagazine.com and find more at her site, www.perverseosmosis.com.

Aaron Coleman interviewed the singer Miss Lupita for our February issue. His e-book, Volume NeXt (which includes poems from his first book, *A Little Aaron Coolery*), will be available soon at www.zosoproducts.com. This month, Coleman begins hosting *Featured at the Center*, an evening of performance and art at the Houston GLBT Community Center. The first night in this monthly program is Friday, April 8, 7-9 p.m.

ReadOut Short



Edge of Midnight: The Life of John Schlesinger
William J. Mann

Billboard Books (www.watsonguptill.com/index_billboard.php)

April 2005 marks the 35th anniversary of the first X-rated film to win an Academy Award—John Schlesinger's *Midnight Cowboy*—and Billboard Books marks the occasion with the publication of the first biography of the film director. • Schlesinger's career in cinema, stage, opera, and television spanned half a century, but it was his films that made him famous—films like *Darling*, *Billy Liar*, *Midnight Cowboy*, *Far from the Madding Crowd*, *Sunday Bloody Sunday*, and *Marathon Man*. • *Edge of Midnight* is the story of the extraordinary Schlesinger, from his early days as an actor for the BBC carefully con-

cealing his homosexuality (then a crime in Great Britain) to the ultimate prize, the Oscar, and his glittering nights as a Hollywood host to his critical and box office successes and failures. Here, too, are his revelatory, often hilarious, anecdotes about Sir Laurence Olivier, Julie Christie, Dustin Hoffman, Glenda Jackson, Dirk Bogarde, Ian McKellen, Sean Penn, Sally Field, Rupert Everett, and Madonna. • John Schlesinger in 1971 on *Sunday Bloody Sunday*: "It's my story, my own bloody Sunday—my affair with a young man. Nothing like it, ever, has been put on the screen before. That kiss was going to be in close-up or not at all." In 1995, on *Midnight Cowboy*: "I don't know if many people are aware that Warren Beatty wanted to play the cowboy. Oh, yes, he really, really wanted the part. But I wanted an unknown, and Jon Voight was perfect—sexy enough but not glamorous like Beatty. Somehow seeing Warren Beatty fail as a hustler on Forty-Second Street would be sort of ludicrous." • Somehow not reading *Edge of Midnight* would also be sort of ludicrous. —Troy Carrington ■



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HOME ECONOMICS

A crash course in how to buy your first house

by Trista Morrison

Buying your first home is a lot like taking an exam—the more effort you put into preparing, the happier you are likely to be with the outcome.

Before you start your preparations, however, take a moment to make sure that you are ready to be a homeowner. While escaping your landlord's prying eyes may seem enticing, remember that you'll also be leaving behind the convenience of having someone to manage your maintenance conundrums. Renting also offers more flexibility to relocate than owning;

aside from being tied to the housing markets, it may take several years of appreciation to recuperate your upfront costs after purchasing a home.

That said, most people find that the benefits of home ownership outweigh the challenges. Aside from obvious advantages such as being able to rip out shag carpet and repaint mustard yellow walls, owning a home is financially attractive—especially when tax time rolls around.

Owning a home opens the door to the world of itemized deductions. People who

don't own a home usually don't have enough deductions to justify itemizing. But once you buy a home, you can deduct the interest on your mortgage, property taxes, any "points" you pay when you purchase the home, charitable contributions, and even the fees you pay to your tax and financial advisers.

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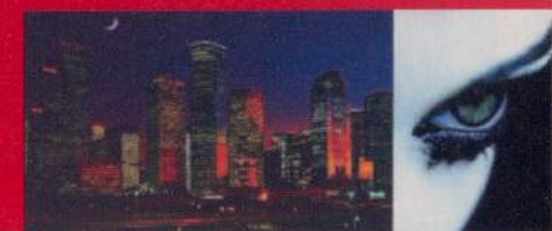
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Once you decide to buy a house, the next step is figuring out how much you can afford to spend.

There are a myriad of financing options for first-time home buyers. Which option a buyer chooses really depends on that buyer's individual needs.

First-time buyers who are low on cash but have an Individual Retirement Account (IRA) can access up to \$10,000 from their account for the purpose of buying their first home, without paying the early-withdrawal penalty.

Even if you don't have an IRA, a lack of

readily available cash isn't as much of a hindrance as many first-time buyers think. Government loans allow first-time buyers to purchase a home with very little down payment, but the interest rates tend to be higher than with some other loans. First-time buyers who put less than 20 percent down should also be aware that most lenders will charge additional monthly fees known as private mortgage insurance (PMI).

Unlike in school, however, there are acceptable ways to "cheat" your way out of paying PMI. One common approach is to take out two loans, one for approximately 80 percent of the purchase price and another for between 10 and 20 percent, depending on how much you put down.

Given the plethora of financing options available, first-time buyers should consider taking the time to interview several lenders

and find one they feel comfortable with. Since different lenders may approve you for different amounts, it is also important to talk to them about how much they can offer you. For those who think this sounds too time-consuming or confusing, consider selecting a mortgage broker to shop around for you.

FIELD TRIP

Now that you know how much you can afford to spend, can you head into the field and start looking at properties? Not quite.

It's important to have an idea of what amenities are most important to you and what neighborhoods you are interested in before viewing properties with a real estate agent.

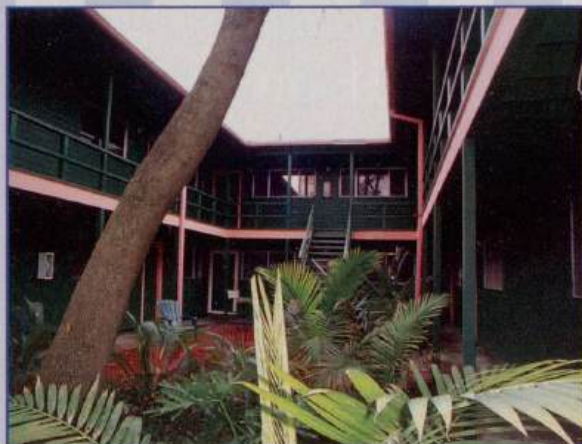
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First-time buyers operating in a sellers' market might consider getting preapproved by their lender before looking at properties. Preapproval allows buyers to move faster once they find the property they want, lessening the chance of losing their dream home to the competition.

Buying your first home can seem overwhelming, but with a good real estate team it doesn't have to be. Take the time to find an agent and lender that you feel comfortable with, and be straightforward with them. You shouldn't be afraid to speak your mind, because ultimately, you're the one who has to live with the outcome.

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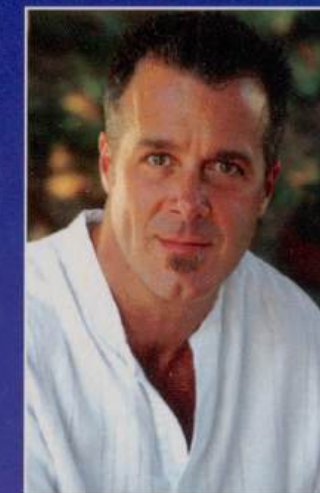
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HOUSE HUNTER

Tips to help you find the right real estate agent

by Paul R. Huard

When it comes to choosing a real estate agent that's right for you, keep three words in mind—picky, picky, picky.

That's because buying or selling a home is one of the most serious financial decisions you will ever make. You want an agent who will know the market and the art of negotiation, and have your best interests in mind.

So think of the search as a job interview. You are "hiring" someone who will help you make a significant financial decision with your home purchase or sale.

With that attitude in mind, it doesn't hurt to find an agent who has a pocketful of references from satisfied clients.

If you have family or friends who have recently purchased a home, ask for a referral. Getting a recommendation is assurance that the real estate agent has a proven track record in customer service, professionalism, and success.

If you are not able to get referrals, you can quickly find agents by hitting the street. Keep an eye on the open houses in the area in which you want to buy, attend the open houses, and make a point of talk-

ing to the agents you meet there.

Another good way to identify agents is by scanning the real estate sections of your newspaper or look for agent information on "for sale" signs. While the number of listings and signs is not necessarily an indication of what agent will work best with you, it is a simple way of seeing which agents are active in that area.

Once you find an agent, ask them for a list of past customers you can contact for a reference—then listen carefully to what the former customer says.

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Realtors, some of the hallmarks of a great real estate agent include:

A strong knowledge of your area of interest. A good agent knows the history of price trends in your neighborhood of interest, as well as what has or has not sold and why.

He or she will also know where the "fixer-upper" opportunities may be.

Select an agent who works those neighborhoods on a daily basis. The broker should also know if employers are moving into or out of this area, and how that will affect home values and inventory.

Find out if the agent has Immediate access to new listings. Your chances of getting a good price on the home of your dreams may hinge on working with an agent who can show you homes the minute they come on the market and, in some cases, before they're even listed.

Your agent may want to show you properties on a moment's notice, so build some flexibility into your own schedule as well.

Look for an agent with good listening skills. Although the current market means buyers no longer have to make instant purchase decisions, you will have a chance at getting the home you want if you can move quickly.

Work with an agent who won't waste your time showing you homes that are out of your price range or are one bedroom short of what you need. The sign of a good agent is one who will listen to your needs and will only show you homes that meet those needs.

Seek out an agent with excellent negotiating skills. In a soft market, give and take between the seller and buyer is key. Pick an agent with good negotiating skills who will drive the best bargain on your behalf.

A good agent will know how to walk that fine line between driving a hard bargain and what counteroffer has the best chance of being accepted.

Look for a good local network. Before you begin pounding the pavement looking at homes, you'll need to get preapproved for a loan. Your agent should be able to refer you to some good lending sources.



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AMERICAN DREAM

Programs help first-time buyers with down payment

by Chandra Orr

It's a daunting task.

Saving for the customary 20-percent down payment on a home may seem like it will take forever, but first-time home buyers may not need as much down as they think, according to Diane Giarratano, director of education for Novadebt, a nonprofit housing and credit counseling service.

"The biggest myth is that you have to come up with the 20 percent down. Many people don't know about the first-time home buyer programs," Giarratano said.

"Coming up with 20 percent of the mortgage can be difficult if you don't already have a home that you can draw on the equity," she said.

That's why many first-time home buyer programs require only 3 percent to 5 percent down.

"Another myth is that, along with the down payment, the closing costs are very expensive," she said, "but if you do a first-time home buyer program, it's not that bad."

Typically, home buyers pay \$5,000 to \$7,000 in closing costs, which cover fees for processing documents and appraisals, among other things. While that may seem like a lot, those paying a lower down payment will have an easier time meeting those costs.

Federal Housing Administration loans are a popular type of low down-payment programs. Available through the federal government, FHA loans come in various forms, each aiming to make the dream of home-

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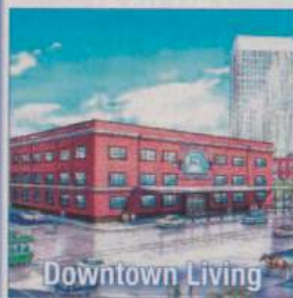
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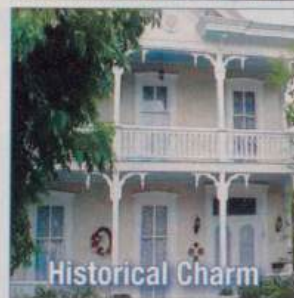
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The only catch: Those who don't put 20 percent down have to pay private mortgage insurance, a fee that the lender charges to cover the risk associated with small down payments. The options don't end there, though. In addition to programs for first-time home buyers offered on the federal and state level, low-income families and individuals may qualify for special mortgage offers.

"There's a lot out there. You would be surprised. There are always programs through HUD [Housing and Urban Development Department] and Fannie Mae for low-income people," she said.

First-time home buyers who are unable to secure a low down payment have plenty of options as well.

"Certain companies offer the option to take money from a 401(k) to buy your first home with no tax penalty and you don't have to pay it back," she said.

"While this option is not available to all employees, most programs allow first-time home buyers to borrow against their vested 401(k), but according to Giarratano, with this opportunity comes a downside.

"When borrowing against some 401(k)s, you see a cut in your paychecks. You have less income as you're paying it back," she said.

Additionally, some lenders offer piggy-back or combo loans to home buyers with high credit scores, but Giarratano urges lenders to do their research before signing on the dotted line.

"What some lenders are offering is an 80/20 loan. You are financing 80 percent through a conventional mortgage and financing the additional 20 percent through a home-equity loan," she explained. "It's a little bit risky—just be cautious."

"If the house doesn't appreciate, you can end up owing more than what the home is actually worth, but it can be equitable for people who live in areas

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where homes appreciate very, very quickly."

Regardless of the route taken, first-time home buyers usually need to come up with some type of a down payment, and the bigger the better.

"The more money you put down, your interest rate may be lower and the better off you are because you'll be paying off the mortgage sooner," she said.

"Saving can be overwhelming for people, but it doesn't have to be," she said. "The first thing I would recommend when thinking about buying a home is to take a look at your budget. You can't just buy a home for the amount the mortgage company tells you that you can afford."

The benefits of budgeting are twofold, according to Giarratano. A budget not only helps future homeowners save

for that sometimes dreaded down payment, it also helps determine the cost of the home that one can realistically afford.

"If you are renting and you want to buy a home, you need to consider the difference between your current rent and your future mortgage payment—and also include the increase in utilities, and taxes," she said. "You should be able to put the difference between the two aside in a bank account. If you can't do that, you're not ready for a home."

For example, if a renter paying \$600 per month in rent and utilities is eyeing a home with monthly mortgage, utility and tax payments totaling \$1,000, they should be able to save \$400 per month, the difference in expenses, according to Giarratano.

"You need to determine what can

work into your current budget," she said. "Can you afford it right now? With this economy, you can't rely on increases you don't have yet. You have to work with what you do have."

When budgeting, it's not enough to trim down on extraneous expenses, she said.

"You have to have a goal. You have to decide, 'This is how much I want for my down payment, and I'm going to save it in this amount of time,'" she said. "You definitely want to have it specific, measurable, and timed out."

Prospective homeowners can contact Fannie Mae (www.fanniemae.com, 800-732-6643) and the U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development (www.hud.gov) for information on first-time home buyer programs.



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MORTGAGE MATTERS

There are loan options to suit most every buyer

by Mark Edward Nero

When it comes to shopping for home loans, a thorough comparison of lender rates and programs could equal greater savings in the long run. Borrowers should be persistent in getting informed about what type of loan they are getting, what fees are involved, how long it'll take, and what type of documentation is needed for their specific loan. There are banks, savings and loans, mortgage brokers, mortgage bankers, and

lending facilities that you can get home loans from.

And just like there are several types of lenders, there are also numerous types of loans available. Among the most popular are fixed-rate loans. These are normally 30-, 20-, 15- or 10-year term loans where the rate stays the same for the entire term, meaning your payment never goes up or down.

Fixed-rate loans currently dominate the

market. Long-term fixed-rate loans are good for people who can comfortably qualify for the loan they want and expect to stay in their homes for many years.

Another popular type of loan is the adjustable loan. Under these loans, borrowers willing to sacrifice the long-term security of a fixed-rate loan can get a lower interest rate and start with lower payments if they take an adjustable-rate mortgage.

This mainly benefits two types of borrow-

ers: those expecting to move within five years and those wanting the slightly lower rate to help them qualify for the loan.

Nowadays, even people with little cash or spotty credit histories can potentially get a home loan. For those with a steady income but little down-payment cash, Fannie Mae, one of the nation's largest sources of home mortgage funds, offers "Flexible 97," a mortgage program allowing borrowers to limit their down payment to 3 percent of the cost of their home.

Borrowers who have cash flow but little or no savings, savings but no cash flow, poor credit ratings, and other special situations can find their own best mortgages by checking into balloon mortgages. These are loans that often carry monthly payments as low as those of 30-year mortgages, but they usually come due for payoff in five or seven years.

These can be great loans for homeowners who know they won't be staying put, yet like the certainty of a fixed rate. But they're risky for someone who stays in a home beyond its loan term, because then the homeowner will need to either find a replacement mortgage, move or make that huge balloon payment.

Then there's hybrid mortgages, such as crossing a balloon mortgage with a fixed- or adjustable-rate mortgage. These loans stay fixed for five or seven years, then convert to either fixed-rate or variable-rate mortgages. They have lower rates than fixed-rate mortgages, but carry the risk of having the last 25 years of the loan being an unknown.

Again, it's an option good for people who like fixed payments, who need room on the rate to qualify for the loan or who expect to move before the fixed part of the loan expires.

There's also low-documentation and no-documentation loans. If you're self-

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employed or have a complicated financial situation, you could opt for one of these, especially if you're in a hurry to get into a particular house or if your income is rising rapidly. Instead of asking for tax returns, business statements and other paperwork that a borrower usually might be expected to provide, low-doc lenders are willing to make the loan fast and easy. But it comes at a price: maybe half of a percent more, or even a full percentage point, dependent on the lender.

Besides the above, there's plenty of other loan options out there from both private and public lenders. There are also a variety of government loans.

When looking for the loan that's right for you, it is a good practice to compare three to five different lenders or mortgage brokers.

For example, if you find a lender that offers a certain percentage rate and all the others charge one-quarter point more, you'll potentially save hundreds of dollars in interest over the life of a 30-year, \$100,000 fixed-rate mortgage.

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My House is Your Home

Private ownership agreements make sense for gay and lesbian households

by Joe Milano

In any real estate transaction, it can be valuable to have an attorney review the documents that the title company and lender prepare, according to Houston attorney Debra Hunt. "This is a human transaction," she says. "People make mistakes."

Having an expert set of eyeballs on these documents can help with a myriad of issues, including unexpected liens or dealing with known liens appropriately, and spotting things like easements or problems with fence lines on surveys. And in cases when buyers deal directly with sellers, it is best to have an attorney prepare the earnest money contracts or review them once they're drawn.

For just about everyone, Hunt highly recommends using a Realtor when buying and selling property. "They are trained in dealing in the legal world of real estate. That's their forte. They can walk the buyer through the details of earnest-money contracts, and help make selections that are appropriate for that particular transaction."

But for GLBT persons and the issues we face, it's especially important to seek legal help from knowledgeable professionals such as Hunt, whose law firm Moore & Hunt has served our community since

1987. Because when it comes to property ownership, title companies and real estate professionals work out of laws in the property code. In Texas, the set of laws regarding survivorship, which often dictate the disposition of property for same-sex couples, have moved to the probate court.

Hunt says that's often why a title company or mortgage company will tell a gay or lesbian couple that they "can't do" what they want when it comes to structuring the title or financing the home using one or both names. These days it takes an expert in probate matters, specifically in those laws that govern unmarried and same-sex couples, to get the initial documentation done correctly. And that almost never happens.

That's why Hunt does most of her work for members of our community after the transaction closes. "The acquisition of a first house is often what triggers the need for personal documentation such as wills and powers of attorney," she says. "Couples figure, 'Now we have an asset and now we need to do the adult thing and protect it.' This way, in cases of death or incapacity, we can make sure things don't end up worse than they already are."

Since her work for GLBT persons is usual-

ly done after the fact, Hunt states there's no right way or wrong way when it comes to listing one partner or both on the title.

"We can do things after the fact regardless of how the title is structured," she says.

"With joint ownership we can do survivorship agreements that pass the property to the survivor on the event of death of the first owner. If we only have one partner owning the property legally, we can do private contractual agreements that set up rights of possession for the other partner, including obligations to contribute to mortgage and taxes."

In fact, it's when only one partner in a relationship is shown on the title that makes an ownership agreement especially critical. Hunt points out that this happens in many types of situations. Perhaps only one partner was eligible for financing due to credit reasons. If one partner had a contract where his or her employer agreed to buy the house in a transfer situation, that partner may have needed to be listed as the sole owner. In many cases, one partner simply owned the house before entering into the new relationship and didn't want to refinance just to change the title.

In cases like these, a private contractual

agreement known as "equitable ownership" can be drawn that states how proceeds should be split up when the property is sold. Hunt warns that such agreements must be reduced to writing in order to be enforceable. In that way, the partner who is not listed on the title but who may have made mortgage payments or other contributions can prove ownership interest and make a claim.

Hunt emphasizes that these arrangements have to be done actively. "The myth I have been fighting for years is that joint ownership implies rights of survivorship. There is no implied survivorship in Texas for any jointly owned property including real estate, autos, or bank accounts."

In any case, what is important is that couples take the time to communicate with

each other and make plans well in advance for the disposition of the property upon dissolution of their relationship. "It's while cou-

"The myth I have been fighting for years is that joint ownership implies rights of survivorship. There is no implied survivorship in Texas for any jointly owned property including real estate, autos, or bank accounts."

ples are getting along and while they're in agreement that it's best to talk about things and get them reduced to writing," recommends Hunt. "So that if a time comes when a couple is no longer in agreement, they can refer back to see what the agreement

really was."

In some ways, Hunt says, property ownership agreements can resemble prenuptial agreements among our heterosexual counterparts. They spell out what happens while a couple owns property together, and they dictate what will happen when a couple doesn't want to own the property anymore. With joint owners, such agreements can pave the way for a more predictable outcome if one partner wants out and the other one doesn't.

"It's a 'pay me now or pay me later' kind of thing," Hunt adds.

"You could pay a couple hundred dollars for a good solid agreement tailored to the needs of both parties during a year when everything is great, or you can wait until a split up and end up paying tens of thousands of dollars to litigate."

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Sara Rook (far r) posed at the 2004 Houston Transgender Unity Banquet with family friends (l-r) Deanna Grimes, Barbra Shore, and Rebecca Williams (also pictured on page 12 with her mother, Brandi Williams) and daughter Christine Rook.

FOR YOUR CALENDAR

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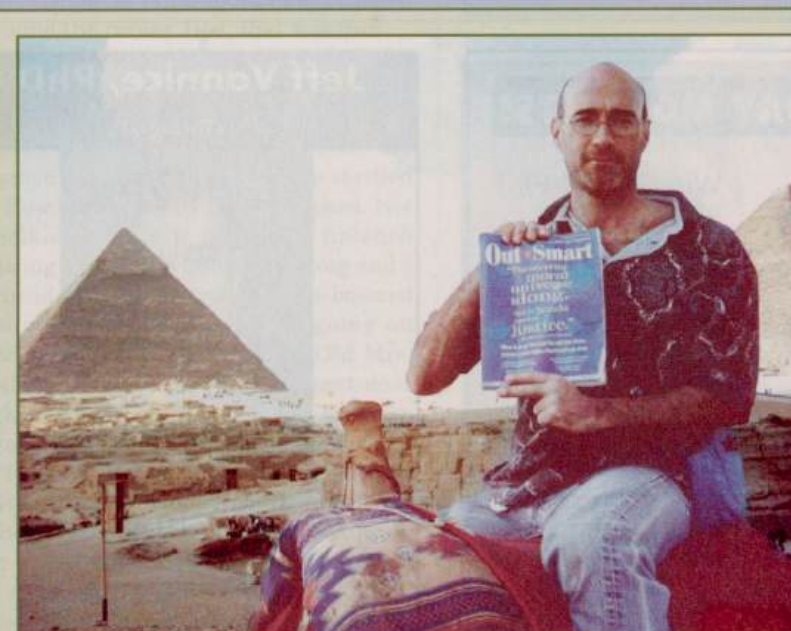
4/2 **Masquerade Gala.** Benefits Human Rights Campaign. Info: www.hrchouston.org.

4/19 **Houston Transgender Unity Banquet.** Benefits the Peggy Rudd Transgender Scholarship Fund. Info: www.ticketweb.com.

4/23 **Houston Pride Band Out West Concert.** Info: www.houstonprideband.org.

4/23-24, 4/30-5/1 **Houston International Festival.** OUTSMART also sponsors the PFLAG booth at the festival. Info: www.ifest.org, www.pflaghouston.org.

4/30 **Progressive Dinner.** Benefits AssistHers and Uncommon Legacy Houston. Info: www.assisthers.org.

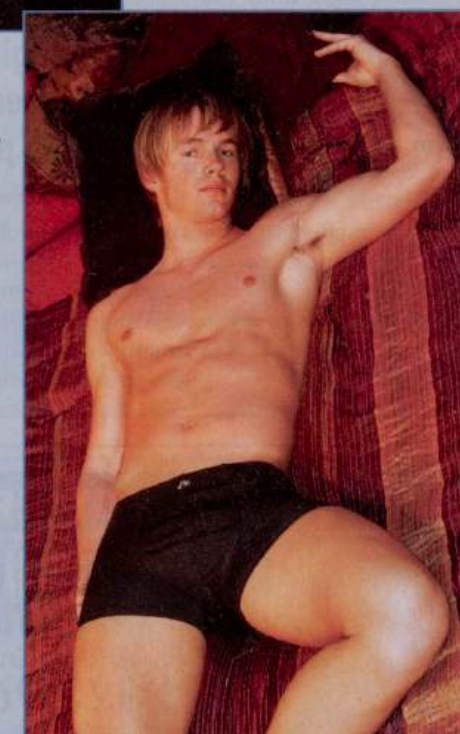


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Models in their underwear from M2M Fashion will spark the Alley's Act Out night on April 7. (Model: Brad, courtesy of Neil Hamil.)

UNDERNEATH IT ALL

Join OUTSMART at the Alley Theatre's next Act Out GLBT mixer on April 7, beginning at 5:30. Presented in conjunction with the production of Steve Martin's comedy *The Underpants*, the evening will include informal modeling of the latest in men and women's underclothes from M2M Fashion along with cocktails and appetizers. DJ Mike Bell from Six Degrees and Mercury Room will provide music. This month, Act Out moves to the Alley Center for Theatre Production, 14 floors atop the adjacent parking garage, with a stunning view of downtown. Tickets for 7:30 performance of *The Underpants*: www.alleytheatre.org.

UNITY BANQUET: DALTON DEHART; EGYPT: COURTESY KEN NIX; M2M MODEL: JOEL PETER JOHNSON

A GOOD HABIT

From her middle-age perspective, Sally remembers a youthful sister act

Crow's feet, dog jowls, and turkey wattles. Despite my menagerie of aging signs, the inner me is still a kid—immature, impulsive, and impertinent.

When I was little I couldn't wait for the freedom I expected would come with growing up. Once, at 16, I had adult power for a brief moment. It was my high school drama class final exam performance. I hoped to pass, even if just barely. Wearing an authentic nun's habit I'd borrowed from an authentic nun, I stepped onto the stage as Sister Felicity in a hastily rehearsed scene from *Suddenly Last Summer*. All I had to do was stand there in that heavy habit with my hands clasped and deliver my lines. For a rambunctious cut-up like me, holding still required serious acting.

Miracle of miracles, my portrayal garnered me an instant A. Maybe I really had talent. Either that or our faggy drama

teacher recognized my budding queerness and wanted to encourage me to get into theater where I'd find kindred spirits.

I was so stoked about getting the A, I stayed in costume after class. I felt invincible inside those massive folds of fabric. A

Any hint of my Jewishness was pretty well concealed by the giant crucifix hanging solemnly against my black-draped teenage bosom. My robes bustled with purpose as I strode across campus.

voluminous veil and starched white headpiece hid my tell-tale high forehead and curly hair. Any hint of my Jewishness was pretty well concealed by the giant crucifix hanging solemnly against my black-draped teenage bosom. My robes rustled with

purpose as I strode across campus to assembly. A sea of schoolmates hushed and parted to let me pass.

Mr. Mendez was on hall monitor duty outside the auditorium. I knew from his economics class that he considered himself a good Catholic and didn't tolerate any joking around on the subject. (Needless to say, I never got an A from Mr. Mendez.) He guarded the entrance in his typical authoritarian stance. What an opportunity. I walked up and looked him sternly in the eye.

"May I help you, Sister?" Courtesy dripped from his usually reprimanding tongue.

I stared, thrilled he didn't see past my wimple and recognize me—the smart-aleck kid he'd busted passing notes featuring my less-than-flattering likenesses of him.

All Mr. Mendez saw was a nun. A nun who apparently expected something from

him. Had I thrown him into a Catholic school flashback? Sweat beaded onto his forehead and upper lip. My stringent economics teacher was at a loss. Did I have Mr. Mendez scared? What a potent feeling!

Poor Mr. Mendez shifted and fidgeted like one of his daydreaming economics students suddenly called on to explain supply and demand. I must have broken character for a second, because a tentative recognition furrowed Mr. Mendez's already frown-creased brow. Was he seeing the real me behind the veneer? He wasn't totally sure. "Sheklow, is that you?"

I flashed a grin. Mr. Mendez's reverent look drooped into his standard scowl. Before he could respond I rustled past him, glided into the auditorium, and slipped into the back row. Heads turned. The lights dimmed. Eventually the murmur subsided.

After assembly, I drove myself home. My brother had loaned me his 1940 Dodge coupe for the day. People in passing cars did double takes at the nun behind the wheel of a rusty old wreck. Just before I turned onto our street, I lifted my be-robed arm out the window, black gabardine flapping in the wind. When I was sure plenty of gawking drivers and passengers were looking my way, I held up my hand and raised my middle finger. The old car's tires squealed as I gunned it around the corner. God, that was fun!

I parked in our driveway, checked the mailbox, and waved at our next-door neighbor as if it were any other after-school day. On my way to the front door, my reflection in the living room window startled me. How authentically nunly I looked. Not schoolkid-ish at all. Before I'd finished admiring myself, the telephone rang and I ran inside. My mom's frantic voice boomed through the receiver, "What's going on there? Is everything all right?" Old Mrs. Vineberg, our strictly kosher next-door neighbor, had freaked and called my mom at work to report a nun on the premises.

"It's okay, Mom. I'm still wearing my habit costume." While I chatted with my mother, I spotted our neighbor looking in from across the driveway. I smiled, waved, and remembering I still wore the habit, blessed Mrs. Vineberg with the sign of the cross.

Even now, in my mid-'50s, nothing's really changed. It's still the same wiseacre me inside. Being middle-aged is like a costume—a disguise that confers an automatic status we don't have as young people. Getting older is fun—thrilling, actually. Like being a nun and flipping the bird from a speeding jalopy.

Writer Sally Sheklow and her wife pretend to be grownups in Eugene, Oregon.



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by Victor Zorn

GOOD TASTE

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Other participating restaurants in the Houston event (part of a 60-city nationwide effort) include Ibiza Food & Wine Bar, Magnolia Bar & Grill, Pesce, Quattro, Trevisio, and Zula. General admission: \$85.

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FOOD NEWS

- Sky Bar Sushi Bar & Grill has opened in Galveston (2107 Postoffice, 409/621-4759, www.galvestonskybar.com).
- With spring, the delectable soft-shell crabs pan-fried in olive oil briefly return to Pico's, 5941 Bellaire Blvd., 662-8383; 9401 I-10, 713/461-5161; www.picos.net).
- Dylan Murray (pictured, right) is now executive chef at benjy's in the Village (2424 Dunstan, 713/522-7602, www.benys.com).
- We hear that Baba Yega Express will open this month next door to the venerable Baba Yega (2607 Grant, 713/522-0042).



Dylan Murray, chef at benjy's in the Village

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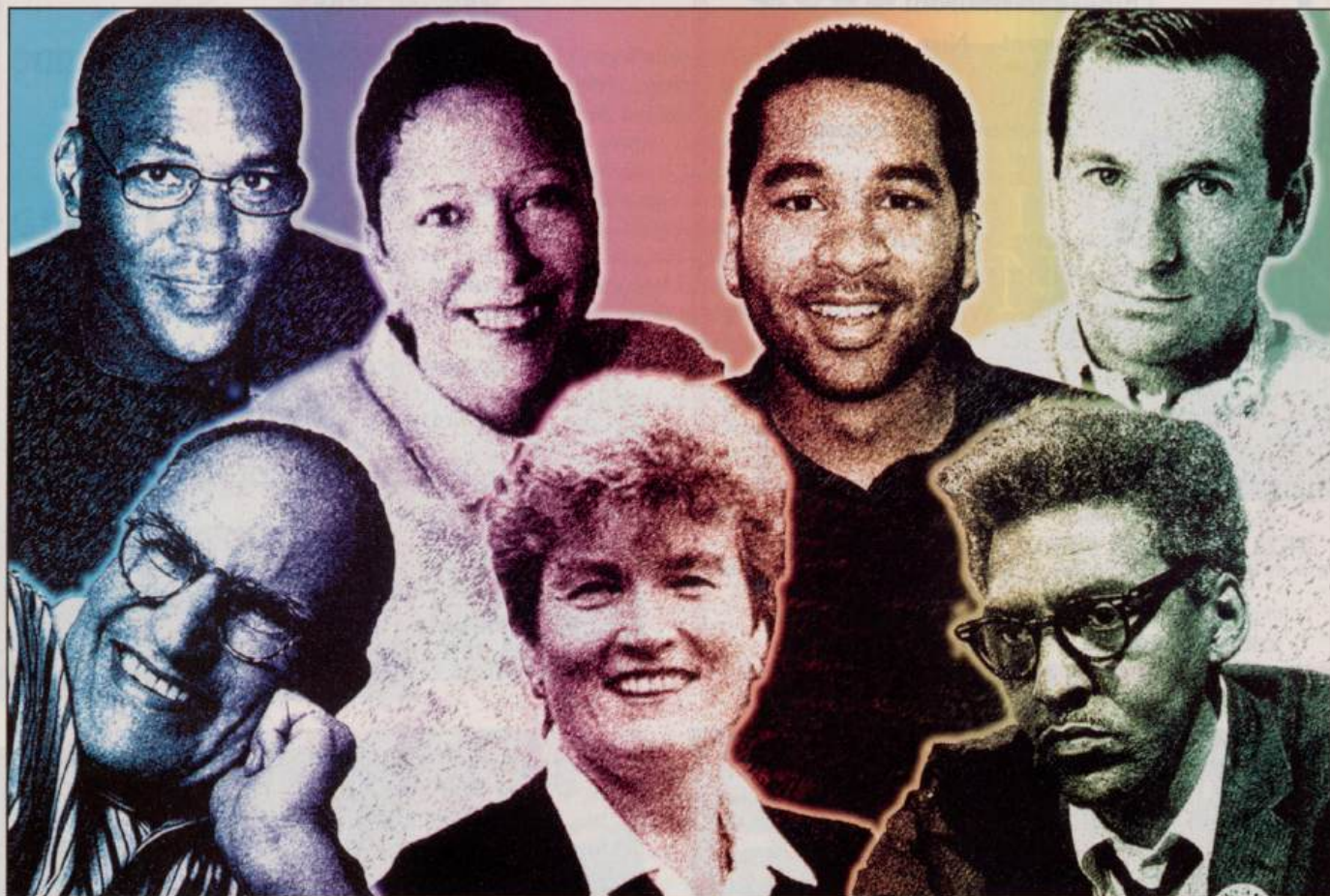
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by Victor Zorn

PHILADELPHIA FREEDOM

A festival in Philly marks 40 years of the GLBT rights fight



They could be heroes: The 40 community titans honored at Equality Forum include (clockwise from top left) Phill Wilson, Olga Orraca-Paredes, Faisal Alam, Kevin Jennings, Bayard Rustin, Margarethe Cammermeyer, and Larry Kramer. Read about them and the other heroes: www.equalityforum.com.

On July 4, 1965, 40 activists demonstrated for gay and lesbian civil rights in front of Independence Hall and the Liberty Bell. Nearly 40 years later, activists from across the nation (and now officially including bisexual and transgender brethren and sistren) again converge on Philadelphia to commemorate that seminal event in the struggle as part of Equality Forum, April 25-May 1.

The annual celebration include these major events:

- The Sol Mednick Gallery and Gallery 1401 present *Trespass: Violating Male Spaces*, an exhibition of photographs by Arthur Tress, whose work developed during the golden age of art photography in the mid-'70s.
- On April 26, Jonathan Katz, director of the Larry Kramer Initiative for Lesbian

and Gay Studies at Yale, moderates a panel discussion, "Invisibility: Gay Icons in U.S. History." Mara Keisling, executive director of National Center for Transgender Equality, leads a session addressing trans issues.

- On April 29, the International Business Colloquium addresses issues facing GLBT executives and opportunities in the worldwide market. Panelists include Lowell Sevin, PlanetOut CEO.
- Bishop Gene Robinson, whose ordination as an openly gay cleric has riven the Episcopal denomination, delivers the sermon at the May 1 interfaith service at historic Christ Church Philadelphia. Other participants include the Rev. Beth Stroud, the lesbian minister recently defrocked by the Methodist church.
- On May 1, Equality Forum honors 40 community heroes (some posthumously),

including Faisal Alam, Storme DeLarvarie, Kate Kendall, Harvey Milk, Tony Kushner, Martina Navratilova, and Bayard Rustin. Robert Gant of *Queer as Folk* is master of ceremonies for the event.

- Later that day, Cyndi Lauper headlines the free National Celebration concert at Independence Hall. Comedian Kate Clinton also performs.

The Marriott Convention Center, the official event hotel, and 21 other Philadelphia-area inns—ranging from Ritz-Carlton to Best Western—offer discounts on room rates. US Airways offers special fares.

Equality Forum, 800/990-3378, www.equalityforum.com

Victor Zorn reported on spring Olivia cruises in our March issue.

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Calendar of Events

Deadline for OutSmart's May issue is 5 p.m., Monday, April 11.

APRIL

Daily (Mon.-Fri.)

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

Daily (Mon.-Sat.)

HIV Testing. The Montrose Clinic offers free confidential HIV testing at these locations. **Monday:** Bricks, 617 Fairview, 4-8 pm; O, 710 Pacific, 9 pm-1 am. **Tuesday:** The 611, 611 Hyde Park, 4-8 pm; Club Houston, 2205 Fannin, 8 pm-midnight. **Wednesday:** Mary's, 1100 Westheimer, 4-8 pm; Ripcord, 715 Fairview, 9 pm-1 am; 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 (Wed.)

Chevis Regal. Zydeco bandleader Wilfred Chevis is a protégé of Clifton Chenier, the King of Zydeco. Hear his music and his words as he play, play, play, then open the floor to Q&A. Free. 7:30 pm at the Eldorado Ballroom, 2310 Elgin.

Information and reservations: 713/526-7662 or www.projectrowhouses.org.

8 & 9 (Fri. & Sat.)

2nd Blessings Rummage Sale. Like bargains? You'll love Bering Memorial United Methodist Church's annual rummage sale. A huge tent covering most of the parking lot behind the church is filled with great finds, old and new. There are clothes, books, furniture, kitchen stuff, yard equipment, toys, and just about anything you can think of. Rain or shine, the rummage sale is open both days, 7 am-2 pm at 1440 Harold Street at Mulberry. Info: 713/661-8817.

8 & 9 (Fri. & Sat.)

Butterfly Bait. Take part of the Butterfly Center home with you, without getting stopped by security. Turn your spring garden into a butterfly haven at the Cockrell Butterfly Center's Spring Plant Sale—at the greenhouses on the roof of the HMNS parking garage, where all the plants for the Cockrell Butterfly Center are raised. Free with a purchase of \$20 or more (cash, checks, and major credit cards accepted). 9 am-3 pm at the Cockrell Butterfly Center of the Houston Museum of Natural Science. Park in the HMNS garage, on the corner of Hermann Dr. and Caroline, and take the elevator to the 7th floor. Info: 713/639-4629 or www.hmns.org.

9 (Sat.)

I Am Woman. Hear Me Roar. Marsha Lehman, M.Ed., leads the Authentic Woman Leadership Gathering. Authentic women are encouraged to gather and lead other authentic women

to the gathering, 9 am-3 pm at Creative Life Spiritual Center, 5326 Spring-Stuebner Rd. Info/reservations: 281/350-5157, www.creativelife.org, or contact Lehman at xir8coach@aol.com.

9 (Sat.)

Look, Up in the Sky! It's a Bird, It's a Plane, It's ... Kite Day, a kid-friendly family event presented by Rice Gallery, encourages kiddies of all ages to indulge in a day of art and fun. American artist Jacob Hashimoto's new work, *Superabundant Atmosphere*, is made of 9,000 white silk kites suspended from the ceiling. Visitors can tour the gallery with a free Family Guide, make and decorate origami kites, play Japanese games, and see live demonstrations of traditional Japanese culture. Complimentary drinks and snacks, including make-your-own trail mix, will be provided. Free. 11 am-2 pm at Rice Gallery, Rice University, ground floor, Sewall Hall, entrance 1 off Main at Sunset. Info: 713/348-3254 or www.ricegallery.org.

11 (Mon.)

Correct Reading. This month's installation of the Inprint Brown Reading Series brings bestselling novelist Jonathan Franzen to the stage. His book, *The Corrections*, centers on a dysfunctional Midwestern family as a means to address larger cultural issues. The story was a finalist for the Pulitzer Prize and won other awards as well. \$5. 7:30 pm at the Alley Theatre, 615 Texas Ave. Info: 713/521-2026 or www.inprint-inc.org.

13-17 (Wed.-Sun.)

Dig It. Aurora Picture Show unearths

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

the second annual Media Archeology festival, a spectacle of live film and video magic and majesty. Have your mind blown by Live Cinema, the cinematic answer to DJ-ing. Artists employ film, video, and computer imagery as raw materials for audio/visual composition. The festival will consist of five performances over the course of five days: **Wednesday:** Animal Charm at Aurora Picture Show; **Thursday:** Wet Gate at Barnevelder Movement/Arts Complex; **Friday:** Paper Rad at Mixture Contemporary Art; **Saturday:** TV Sheriff and the Trailbuddies at Orange Show Center for Visionary Art; **Sunday:** People Like Us at DiverseWorks. \$8 per show, \$20 for Festival Pass. Info/reservations: 713/868-2101 or www.aurorapictureshow.org.

15 (Fri.)

Make a Fisk. Guitarists Eliot Fisk and Paco Peña perform Scarlatti, Mendelssohn's *Song without Words*, two preludes from J.S. Bach's *The Well-Tempered Clavier*, solos in the Andalusian style of flamenco, and more. \$26-\$42. 8 pm at

Cullen Theater, Wortham Theater Center, 500 Texas at Smith. Info/reservations: 713/524-5050 or www.dacamera.com.

15 & 16 (Fri. & Sat.)

Taxing Comedy. ComedySportz declares no one is exempt from laughter at its Salute to Red Tape on the day of and the day after America's anti-holiday, TaxTime. True, many say taxes are no laughing matter, but let CSportz take the piss out of that nonsense. It's no problem for these improvisers; as a matter of fact, 1040-EZ. \$12. 8 pm at the ComedySportz Arena, 901 Town & Country Blvd. (at I-10 West and the Belt-way). Info/reservations: 713/868-1444.

16 (Sat.)

Poetry in da Hizeeee! Culture cuts loose with Prather's Poetry Jam. David Prather lays down verse in a way that is interactive, poppin' with energy, and extremely fun for the entire fam. More than an upfront poetry reading, Prather would rather bring it on in full effect, entering on a scooter, juggling boxes, and hurling TVs. \$5. 11 am at the Alley Theatre Neuhaus Stage, 615 Texas Ave. Reservations: 713/228-8421. Info: 713/228-9341 x424.

23 (Sat.)

Go West, Young Band. The Houston Pride Band performance, "Out West," pays homage to vaqueros, rancheros, cowboys, and aboriginal Americans... yep, the American Wild West. But the pageantry doesn't stop with Aaron Copeland's "Hoedown," Ferde Grofé's "Grand Canyon Suite," or John Williams' "The Cowboys." The concert includes special guest emcee, Gene Mikulienka, the openly gay Houston rodeo star featured in the documentary, *American Cowboy*. Also featured is a lariat exhibition by members of the Texas Gay Rodeo Association and line dancing by the Rainbow Ringers Dance Club. \$10. 7 pm at Resurrection MCC at 2025 W. 11th St. in the Heights. Info: Russell Ben Williams at 832/265-3346 or RussellBW@aol.com.

23 (Sat.)

Go Ahead, Touch Somebody's Instrument. Da Camera of Houston presents *Five Drummers Drumming!* With Trommel: A Percussion One Ensemble. Prior to the concert, Da Camera sponsors a musical instrument petting zoo. Children are invited to see, touch, and play instruments featured in that day's performance, presented in conjunction with the Houston Zoo's Earth Day celebration. Free with paid admission to the Houston Zoo. 9:30 am at The Houston Zoo, 1513 North MacGregor. Info: 713/524-5050 or www.dacamera.com.

28 (Thu.)

And the Award Goes to ... Theatre Under The Stars holds the TUTS American Musical Theatre Awards gala this year to honor the writing team of John Kander and the late Fred Ebb. The duo penned such revered musicals as *Chicago*, *Cabaret*, and *Kiss of the Spider Woman*. Their song, "New York, New York" replaced Bernstein's song of the same name as NYC's unofficial theme song. The evening promises to be no less charming than a Kander and Ebb musical, with a cocktail reception, performances, dinner, and dancing. The event benefits TUTS educational and outreach programs. At the Hobby Center, 800 Bagby at Walker. Table sponsorships may be purchased through Carly Glackin at 713/558-2600, ext. 3656. Table sponsorships begin at \$10,000. Or you could buy a car.

30 (Sat.)

Money Makes the World Go Around. Financial professionals present strategies to the many challenges facing nontraditional individuals, couples, and families. Learn how to plan your retirement, manage risks, leave a legacy, and get other financial and legal advice. Free. 8:30 am-12:30 pm at 777 Post Oak Blvd. RSVP: 713/402-6409 by April 22. Info: www.georgehawkins.com or www.chnslaakso.com.

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An electrifying experience, *Pilobolus' Megawatt, Full Strength* is the company's first full-length production, brand new and different than anything it has previously performed. *Megawatt, Full Strength* is a full-throttle, full-company piece blending startling energy with an ironic take on the excess and high-voltage state of the world we live in. This performance is highly physical (people flying everywhere!) yet theatrical, and features music from Radiohead, Primus, Moby, Brian Eno and others.

What: Pilobolus Dance Theatre

When: Friday, April 29, 8 p.m. **Where:** Jones Hall, 615 Louisiana

Info/reservations: 713/227-4SPA, www.spahouston.org, or www.pilobolus.com



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30 (Sat.)

The Bearable Lightness of Bering. Bering Memorial United Methodist's annual community event, the Bering Spring Festival, promises family entertainment, carnival games, a silent auction, and pancakes. The pancake breakfast starts early, so rise and shine for a full day of fun and fellowship. At Bering Memorial United Methodist Church, 1440 Harold St. Info: 713/526-1017 or www.beringumc.org.

30 (Sat.)

You're Gold, Baby! Not to be topped by Theatre Under the Stars (TUTS) pomp and circumstance, the Houston Grand Opera celebrates its 50th anniversary with a Golden Jubilee Gala. Philip Glass conducts excerpts from his Akhnaten, Sir Roger Moore emcees the entire event, and Sir Elton John just might sing a little ditty. Tickets for the concert and post-concert outdoor party are \$250 and \$500, but the real whiz-bang affair is available for \$6,000–\$100,000—an entire weekend of music, revelry, and a dinner prepared by Houston's own Jackson & Company (caterer to stars, dignitaries, and public figures). Proceeds support HGO's mainstage performances and Education and Outreach programs. At the Wortham Theater Center, 500 Texas at Smith. Info/reservations: 713/228-OPERA or 800/62-OPERA.

PLANNING AHEAD

May 1 (Sun.)

More Light Presbyterians/That All May Freely Serve continues its monthly Sunday evening worship services. The services present a welcoming worship and fellowship experience for the entire Houston community. Worship includes communion, special music, and guest preachers. A coffee hour follows the service, and childcare is provided. The Rev. Dr. Louise M. Row will host services at 7 p.m. at St. Philip Presbyterian Church, 4807 San Felipe.

May 2 (Mon.)

TommyTune Awards. Thirty-six high schools from the greater Houston area are participating in the awards this year, the biggest year yet. Participating high schools compete before Houston-based theater professionals. Nominated shows perform spotlight numbers as part of the event. It's like a scaled-down version of the Tonys. The awards ceremony is open to the public. At the Hobby Center, 800 Bagby at Walker. Info/reservations: 713/558-2600.

May 4 (Wed.)

A Little Day Music. You provide your lunch. Da Camera provides the entertainment with Trommel: A Percussion One Ensemble. Tickets are drawn for the upcoming concert, Gypsies and Bohemians (see below). Free. Noon at the Grand Foyer, Wortham Theater Center, Texas at Smith. Information: 713/524-5050 or www.dacamera.com.

May 4 (Wed.)

Peter Pan. Every child and child-at-heart knows and adores the musical story of the spry kids of Never Never Land (all Michael Jackson jokes eschewed). Tony nominee Cathy Rigby stars in her farewell tour of this beloved production. \$27–\$72. Through May 22 at Hobby Center, 800 Bagby at Walker. Info/reservations: 713/558-8887, 888/558-8887, or www.tuts.com.

May 6 (Fri.)

Gypsies and Bohemians. Da Camera of Houston, celebrates the influence of folk music with compositions ranging from Haydn's *G Major* trio to works by Czech masters, Smetana, Dvorák, and Janáček. Oh, that kind of folk. We were expecting something along the lines of Christopher Guest's movie, *A Mighty Wind*. \$21–\$36.50. 8 pm at Cullen Theater, Wortham Theater Center, 500 Texas at Smith. Info/reservations: 713/524-5050 or www.dacamera.com.

May 13 (Fri.)

A Sterling Affair. Opera in the Heights' 5th annual fundraising gala is a black-tie event honoring its first sponsor, Sterling Bank, and Sterling's president and CEO, J. Downey Bridgewater and his wife, Kerri. Melanie Lawson serves as Mistress of Ceremonies for this momentous occasion as Opera in the Heights moves forward into its 10th season with music by the David Caceres Quintet. The evening includes dinner, dancing, a silent auction, and a live auction with Judge Eric Andell as the evening's auctioneer. Sponsorships tables range from \$3,000 to \$25,000. Individual tickets begin at \$200. 7 pm at the River Oaks Country Club, 1600 River Oaks. For more info: 713/861-5303 or www.operaintheheights.org.

PERFORMING ARTS

◆ **42nd Street.** Peggy Sawyer's going to be a star! A Broadway star! Along the way are some of the greatest songs in show-tune history. There's "Lullaby of Broadway," "We're in the Money," and, of course, the title number. April 9 and 10 at The Grand 1894 Opera

House, Galveston, 2020 Postoffice. Tickets: 409/765-1894, 800/821-1894, or www.thegrand.com.

◆ **...for those who live in cities (an homage to the poetry of Bertolt Brecht).** Though he is most commonly known as an absurdist playwright, Bertolt Brecht was also a prolific poet writing over 500 poems, mostly unpublished in his lifetime. Focusing on the period of 1917–1933, dos chicas director Bob Morgan adapts these poems to create a fascinating world on stage, the world of the Weimar Republic of Berlin, Germany 1924. Wedged between the utter destruction of WWI and the catastrophic defeat of WWII, Weimarans staggered from defeat to apocalypse. Cabarets, S&M clubs, brothels, and abundant, cheap drugs offered an antidote to their pain. The seedy hotel/cabaret onstage is a world unto itself, both insidiously and delightfully replete with whores, dissenters, government officials indulging their hedonistic desires, and a Vamp who sings whilst their world flies apart. \$10. April 8, 9, 15, 16, 22, 23, 29, and 30 at Southmore House, 3107 Leeland at Palmer. Info/reservations: 832/283-0858 or dccommune@yahoo.com.

◆ **Houston Youth Emerges.** through dance. High-school-age dance teams and youth dance companies perform with Houston Met Too Youth Training Company. Free. April 28, 8 pm, at Miller Outdoor Theatre. Info: www.houstonmetdance.com.

◆ **Island Nite.** Get your jerk on and feel irie. SHAPE community center and Zoë International bring live Caribbean entertainment, food, and games for the entire family. Free. April 29, 7 pm, at Miller Outdoor Theatre. Info: 713/521-0629 or www.shape.org.

◆ **Jesus Christ Superstar.** The Montgomery College Center for the Arts presents Andrew Lloyd Webber's rock opera, which chronicles the last seven days in the life of Jesus of Nazareth as seen through the eyes of his disciple, Judas Iscariot. \$15. 7:30 pm (Sunday matinees at 2 pm), Thurs.–Sun., April 7–10 and 14–17 at Montgomery College, 3200 College Park Dr., one half mile west of I 45, between Conroe and The Woodlands. Info/reservations: Serena Tripi at 936/273-7021.

◆ **Life Is a Dream.** Pedro Calderón de la Barca wrote this little-known verse drama during the Spanish Golden Age. Sigismondo is the crown prince of Poland, but sources foretell he will bring destruction. Cast away to prison, he is raised a savage. Years later, the king allows Sigi a day in the palace, with disastrous results. Returned to prison, Sigi is told it was all a dream. The characters from his chimera keep showing up in

real life, eventually resulting in Sigismondo taking the throne. And that's when reality becomes a nightmare. At press time, the producing theater, Theatre Collide, had not determined a performance space. Info/reservations: info@theatre-collide.com or www.theatre-collide.com.

◆ **Macbeth.** The Scottish play gets a makeover, with a highly stylized, formalistic staging and contemporary music utilizing Shakespearean text in the lyrics. Free. April 19, 11 am at Miller Outdoor Theatre. Info: 713/759-1314 or www.expresstheatre.com.

◆ **The Mineola Twins.** Paula Vogel examines the sociopolitical history of the U.S. from the '50s through the '80s in her clever comedy about identical twins divided only by their politics (and the way they fill out a sweater). April 20–May 8 at Stages, 3201 Allen Pkwy. For tickets: 713/527-0220 or www.stagestheater.com.

◆ **Movin' Out** is the Tony Award-winning musical conceived, choreographed, and directed by Twyla Tharp and based on 24 classic songs by Billy Joel. It's the story of lifelong friends through two turbulent decades that change them and the world around them forever. Tickets (\$20–\$69) are available at the Hobby Center box office, Ticketmaster outlets, by calling 713/629-3700, or online at www.BroadwayAcrossAmerica.com. April 12–24 at the Hobby Center, 800 Bagby.

◆ **Office Hours.** It's a Friday afternoon in Canada. There's a figure skater on the ledge ready to nix it. In six separate offices, six different but interrelated stories unfold. Through Apr. 16 at the Company OnStage, 536 Westbury Square. Tickets: 713/726-1219.

◆ **Romeo and Juliet.** The Bard belts out some tunes in this operatic version of the feud between the Montagues and the Capulets and the suicidal couple who wish they could all just get along. Ramón Vargas and Ana Maria Martinez make their debuts as the star-cross'd lovers. Tickets start at \$20. April 22–May 8 at Brown Theater, Wortham Theater Center, 500 Texas at Smith. Info/reservations: 713/228-OPERA, 800/62-OPERA, or www.houstongrandopera.org.

◆ **Seussical the Musical.** Dr. Seuss's characters spring to life from the page and sing their little fictional hearts out. The Cat sings from his hat and Horton croons a "hoo." Free. April 7–9 and 14–16 at 8 pm at Miller Outdoor Theatre. For more info: 713/284-8350 or www.hitstheatre.com.

◆ **STOMP.** These musical acrobats are loud, wild, and sexy. Marvel at the grooves these guys lay down with trash-can lids, brooms, even cigarette lighters. The rhythm is gonna get ya. April 29–May 1 (8 pm Friday, →

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♦ **The Underpants.** Steve Martin's hilarious adaptation of Carl Sternheim's German comedy, *Die Hose*, finds a lonely housewife who loses her underpinnings in public. Her minor tragedy transmogrifies into strange fortune, after the occurrence results in new admirers who elect to rent rooms in her own home. Martin's subtle, wry wit thrives in this tale of feminism, sex, politics, and sexism. Through April 24 at the Alley Theatre, 615 Texas Ave. Information/reservations: 713/228-8421 or www.alleytheatre.org.

♦ **Wiener Day at the Rollercoaster.** Wiener Day—the biggest event of the year in Dumpster, Texas. But when family and friends gather at the Fertle home for Wiener Eve dinner, things don't quite plump when they cook. All 18 characters are deftly played by the three resident RMT players. \$18. Through May 7 at Radio Music Theatre, 2623 Colquitt. Tickets: 713/522-7722.

PERFORMING ARTS

For Young People

♦ **HYPE.** Do believe the HYPE. Houston Young Playwrights Exchange, a public showcase from August 12–15, is looking for scripts written by aspiring teen playwrights, age 13–19. Pull up that play you have hidden inside My Documents, polish it up a bit, and send it off by the Friday, May 20 deadline and begin your career as a dramatist now. Accepted playwrights receive \$300 in stipends. Entries may be mailed to ATTN: HYPE, Alley Theatre, 615 Texas Ave., Houston, TX 77002 or e-mail it as a word doc to leanor@alleytheatre.org. For information: 713/228-9341 ext. 425.

♦ **The Little Mermaid.** Linda Daugherty adapts Hans Christian Andersen's time-tested tale of a young mermaid, Pearl, who dreams of the world beyond the sea. Her sisters, grandmother, and father the Sea King all warn her not to venture above the ocean surface, only making it that much more tempting. \$7. April 30–June 11 at the Company OnStage, 536 Westbury Square. For tickets: 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

♦ **African Art Now: Masterpieces from the Jean Pigozzi Collection.** In keeping with the CAM and the Menil's afrocentric exhibitions (see below), the MFA offers an expansive view of what's going on in African art today. Through May 8 at the Museum of Fine Arts, 1001 Bissonnet. Info: 713/639-7540 or www.mfah.org.

♦ **Deep Wells and Reflecting Pools.** A companion exhibit to the Double Consciousness exhibition at the CAM, the Menil invited Houston-based artist David McGee to organize a showcase of art and ephemera including certificates from slave auctions, print materials rife with racist slogans and imagery, and everyday objects emblazoned with racial stereotypes. Through April 17 at The Menil Collection, 1515 Sul Ross. Info: 713/525-9400 or www.menil.org.

♦ **Double Consciousness: Black Conceptual Art Since 1970.** This exhibit of contemporary African-American art illustrates its indelible impression left

on conceptual art in America and its place in the history of modern art. through April 17 at the Contemporary Arts Museum, 5216 Montrose Blvd. Info: 713/284-8250 or www.camh.org.

♦ **Gold! Natural Treasure, Cultural Obsession.** Midas couldn't have dreamt of such a sparkling exhibit. Visit the geological conditions that lead to the precious metal. Catch the fever of the three major gold rushes of the 19th century. Educate the little jewels in your family with a hands-on learning station. Revel in some of the most alluring uses of gold as adornment and beautification. Look for the 25-pound gold bar like those kept in Fort Knox and the stunning Indian wedding sari made of gold thread. \$12 (includes admission to the large-format film *Gold Fever*). Through August 7. Tickets/more info: 713/639-4629 or www.hmns.org.

♦ **Milestones for Peace.** More than 500 artists from around the world, in conjunction with the International Artist's Museum, have created interpretations of stones and variations of that theme and donated them to this traveling exhibit. High-profile individuals such as the Dali Lama, former Presidents Bush & Clinton, and Pope John Paul II have endorsed the project by signing and donating stones to the exhibit. With an additional 10 stones to be donated by Houstonians, it is hoped that the exhibit will prove an effective tool in promoting peace. Through April 31 at Brandon Home Furnishings, 8648 Glenmont. More info: www.creatingpeace.org.

♦ **Notes from a Child's Odyssey: The Art of Kermit Oliver.** The first retrospective of the Texas artist's career, the MFA traces four decades of imagery. Blending contemporary classical elements inspired by his rural Texas heritage and his studies of mythology, religion, and history, Oliver created a style of painting he calls "symbolic realism." Through July 4 at the Museum of Fine Arts, 1001 Bissonnet. Info: 713/639-7300 or www.mfah.org.

♦ **Perspectives 145: Bodys Kinglez.** African sculptor Bodys Kinglez creates architectural models from recycled materials as an urge for peace in the face of the chaos his home country deals with regularly. From Kinshasa in the Democratic Republic of the Congo (formerly Zaire), Kinglez intends his brightly-colored models to be built into community dwellings. Through May 1 at the Contemporary Arts Museum, 5216 Montrose Blvd. Info: 713/284-8250 or www.camh.org.

♦ **Romuald Hazoumé: La Bouche du Roi.** Inspired by animist and Christian cultures, Hazoumé combines African ceremony with modern materials to make totems and masks. Through May 9 at The Menil Collection, 1515 Sul Ross. For more info: 713/525-9400 or www.menil.org.

♦ **Showered in Watercolor.** April showers mean a watercolor show and sale. This show runs the full gamut in style, from abstract to photo-realist. April 5–29 at the Watercolor Art Society-Houston (WAS-H), 1601 W. Alabama. For more information: 713/942-9966 or www.watercolorhouston.org.

♦ **Superabundant Atmosphere.** Jacob Hashimoto's new installation includes 9,000 tiny, shimmering white kites, each handmade from silk glued over a tied bamboo frame. Suspended from the gallery ceiling, the kites create an enormous sculptural cloud rising upward and outward from the rear of the gallery. As the light that streams through the gallery's front window changes throughout the day, so too will the appearance of the installation. At times it seems buoyant and ethereal; at other times it appears to be a solid mass. Through April 17 at Rice Gallery, Rice University, ground floor, Sewall Hall, entrance 1 off Main at Sunset. Info: 713/348-3254 or www.ricegallery.org/new/exhibition/superatmos.html.

♦ **Thought Crimes: The Art of Subversion.** There's art for art's sake, then there's art for social change. This exhibit looks at the works of artists so inclined. Using subversive tactics such as culture jamming, public intervention, and web hacking, these individuals walk the line between artist and criminal. Through May 28 at DiverseWorks, 1117 East Fwy off Main at Naylor. Info: 713/223-8346 or www.diverseworks.org.

♦ **Terry Winters/Paintings, Drawings, Prints 1994–2004.** The first U.S. exhibit to entail Winters' work in all media, this show encompasses his paintings, prints, stage designs, drawings, and artist's books. Influenced by minimalists and process art, his work changed in the '90s from the identifiable to the abstract. April 30–July 10 at the Contemporary Arts Museum Houston, 5216 Montrose. For more info: 713/284-8250 or www.camh.org.

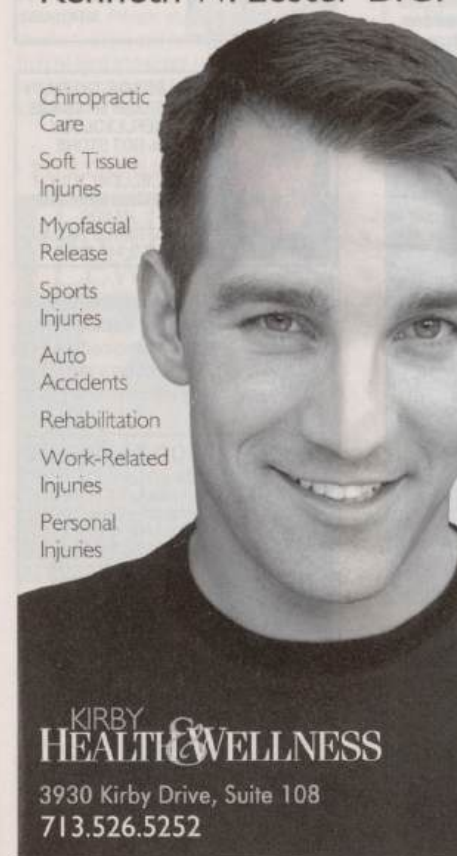
♦ **Yale Street Arts & Flower Market** is a Heights market created for local artists to display and sell their original works of art. Fresh-cut flowers are also available. Entertainment is provided by local musicians and is a highlight throughout the day. The market is free & open to the public from 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. ■

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Business News

Eclipse Sunless Tanning now offers two services for people who want summer color without potentially harmful exposure to sunlight: the Mist-On Tanning System and airbrush tanning. "The airbrush tanning is our premium tanning experience, the same tan you see on Hollywood stars on the red carpet," says Eclipse's owner **Scott Hendrickson** (pictured with his Gayest & Greatest 2004 reader poll runner-up certificate for best tanning studio).



Eclipse also recently added massage therapists Rayfael Roman and Paul Landry to its staff. In addition, the firm offers an array of candles, soaps, and bath salts as well as work by local artists.

Eclipse Sunless Tanning is located at 415 Westheimer, Suite 103. The phone number is 713/520-6611, and the website is www.eclipsesunlesstanning.com.

Patrick McNamara, M.D., has opened the **Skin Renewal Center at Nurture Health** at 1512 West Alabama (713/533-0800). At the new medical spa, the staff offers a range of treatment options, including Botox, Sculptra, FotoFacials, and micro-dermabrasion. The Skin Renewal Center will hold an all-day open house grand opening on April 15.

The center's website is www.nurturehealth.net.

Dr. McNamara maintains his internal medicine practice at 4101 Greenbriar, Suite 355 (713/524-4837). The website is www.patrickmcnamaramd.com.

Cristina Martinez has published the second edition of the **Gay & Lesbian Rainbow Pages**. The 256-page directory is available at no charge at locations throughout the community. The Rainbow Pages phone number is 281/997-9778.

On March 10, Martinez as well as Houston Gay & Lesbian Political Caucus president Maria Gonzalez were honored at a National Women's History Month reception.



At the event held at Meteor, Martinez (r) posted with community activist Linda Morales (l) and her partner, Raquel Cedillo (c), the event hosts.

Gay & Lesbian Rainbow Pages has begun hosting GLBT nights on alternate Tuesdays at **Montrose Diner** (1111 Westheimer, 713/520-8281, www.montrosediner.com).

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A Life in the Theater

continued from page 36

first professional production. He thought I'd be too nervous. But it was a grand experience. So he was my first producer, and he was always around. We lived a couple of blocks from each other in the Village, so I was seeing him all the time. He's been a mentor ever since, and we've been friends.

So besides the playwrights' workshop, you're also teaching a playwriting class at UH, right?

Yes, in that class we just talk about the scripts that they've started or the scripts that they've finished and try to whip them into some kind of shape that they'll be proud of, and let them understand what writing a play is and what it isn't.

What were your first impressions of Houston?

When I first got here and they took me around campus, I said, "I like it already," because I had left 12-degree weather in New York and arrived in 60-degree weather here. I'm getting to the point where if I don't have to deal with the New York winters, I'd just as soon not.

Back when you wrote about a drag queen in *The Madness of Lady Bright* in 1964, it must have been very daring to write about homosexuality.

It never really crossed my mind. You know, you're just writing about people you know, and a good half of them are gay.

Did the press make a big to-do of it?

The press was ready for it. They reviewed *The Madness of Lady Bright* as though it was a play really about loneliness and mistaking beauty for friendship. Only a couple of papers said, "this queen" or "this Nancy." Remember that word? "It's a Nancy living in the Village . . ." Well, it's a damn good play, or it was for its time, and they reviewed it very nicely.

And then you wrote of your own struggle to come to terms with your homosexuality in *Lemon Sky* [1970].

And almost no one got that the lead was gay in *Lemon Sky*. I think there were two reviews that said, "Wow, this is sort of out

there, isn't it?" And the others didn't know what . . .

They didn't understand the conflict between the father and the son?

They didn't quite get it. It was during the time when . . . what was the catch phrase then—*generation gap*? And that was the absolute last day you could use the [phrase]

generation gap and get away with it. The newspapers reviewed it as a generation-gap play and no one came, because we were all sick of generation gaps.

Do you remember the first time a journalist asked if you were gay?

No. They just said, "Have you always been openly gay?" And I said, "Well, since I found out what the hell I was." And it was such a relief to be able to have an excuse for my peculiar psyche. It's all in *Lemon Sky*. I was in my freshman year in college

when that poet came around.

Back to *The Madness of Lady Bright*. Had you had personal encounters with drag queens?

Oh, my gosh, yes! I came from Chicago. I had lived in Chicago for six years, and the drag queens in Chicago are just much more blatant than the ones in New York. Chicago is just much queenier than New York, because the queens are queens, and they go down the street and they parade, and even back then, with the fingernail polish and their hair swept up and sashaying back and forth on the beach . . . The queens in *Balm of Gilead*—there were a couple of queens there and a couple of just plain old butch hustlers in that coffee shop—they were so staid, really, so ordinary. I really borrowed a queen I knew in Chicago to put in *Balm of Gilead*.

What was it like to win the Pulitzer Prize?

You know what? I'm borrowing Harper Lee's quote—"Being a writer in this country, you have to grow a tough hide." I had grown such a tough hide just to protect myself from all

of the negative reviews, seeing people walk out, and seeing people say, "What a piece of shit!" on their way out at intermission for years. So the immediate effect was actually something on the order of, "Well, it's about time" and "Thanks very much, but I'm in the middle of a rehearsal." And then about four months later, after I'd retired out to my house out in Sag Harbor, I sort of said, "Son of a bitch, that is cool!"

Did they give you a dinner?

They give you nothing. When I got it, you got a telegram.

Growing up in Missouri as you did, was Tennessee Williams a big influence?

Oh, of course. I was in a production of *The Glass Menagerie* when I was in high school.

And then people tried to say that *Lemon Sky* was influenced by *The Glass Menagerie*?

Not at all. When I finally found a way to write that play, I didn't want it to be a narrated play like that because *The Glass Menagerie* is, and I sure didn't want the comparison with that. But it just finally came out that way, and I was really annoyed that it did, but it did.

Did you know Tennessee Williams personally?

Yes, very well. We worked together twice. I did the libretto for *Summer and Smoke*, as an opera. Lee Hoibe did the music. And it's a pretty damn good opera, too. It'll catch on eventually [laughs]. And he and I collaborated on a story for television called *The Migrants* that I was nominated for an Emmy for screenplay. But that was the year that *Miss Jane Pittman* won everything, so we knew there wasn't a chance.

I read that it took you a long time to get back to writing after 9/11.

That's still the case. My last play was *Book of Days* [2001], and I'm rewriting another one called *Rain Dance* [2002]. I haven't done anything recently at all. I spend most of my time in Sag Harbor, and when I come in to New York, I'm a Tony voter, so I have to go to Broadway. What I want to see is off-Broadway and off-off-Broadway, but what I have to see is on Broadway.

Bradley David Williams interviewed Christopher Rice for our March issue.

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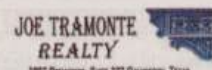


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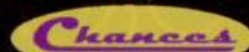
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This three-in-one women's bar provides a place to two-step, rock, or chat. Check out the 9 p.m.-1 a.m. open mic night on Thursdays. Women-fronted bands perform every Saturday night. 1100 Westheimer • 713/523-7217 • www.chancesbar.com.

CLUB 1415

Comedian Nancy Ford takes over the outdoor deck at this Montrose spot on Saturday nights with The Dyke Show and open mic night. 1415 California • 713/522-7066 (1415), 713/961-2867 (Ford).

CLUB BIG YO

Woman-owned and -operated, the Southwest Houston nightspot operates Thursday-Sunday. Big Yo also presents monthly concerts. 6305 Skyline • 713/953-0268 • www.bigyosplash.com.

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EVE

This spot for women takes over the space above Azteca's Bar & Grill Thursday-Saturday. DJ Rocky B supplies the music. Every Thursday night is Singles Night. 2209 Richmond • 713/523-3837 • www.evesfirst.com.

GUAVA LAMP

The reopening of the club in the retail strip at Allen Pkwy adjacent to Stages Repertory Theatre, is slated to take place this month (according to information available at press time). 570 Waugh • 713/524-3359.

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MONTROSE DINER

The new 24-hour eatery now hosts a GLBT night on alternate Tuesdays, presented by the Gay & Lesbian Rainbow Pages. 1111 Westheimer • 713/520-8281 • www.montrosediner.com.

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.

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.

RICH'S HOUSTON

After a brief hiatus as a nongay music venue, Rich's returns as the dance club you once knew. The grand re-opening, set for early April (date not announced at press time) will reveal some renovations and a new lighting and sound system. 2401 San Jacinto • 713/759-9606 • www.richs-houston.com.

RIPCORD

OutSmart readers named this spot the best place to show off your leather in the Gayest & Greatest poll. Inside the bar, the Black Hawk Leather Shop sells treasures for the leather/lewi/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-S0BE (7623) • www.SouthBeachTheNightclub.com.

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

Lyrice 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: The Briar Patch closed in February. Toyz also closed recently.

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

BEHIND THE BAR

WHO: Blanca Burciaga

WHERE: Eve
(2209 Richmond,
713/523-3837)

WHAT'S UP: Order from Burciaga at the new women's club, located above Azteca's Bar & Grill on Richmond at Greenbriar



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 at 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. 3102 Seawall • 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:

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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"Galloway doesn't merely tickle the ivories. He performs." 2300 Ship's Mechanic Row • 409/763-0300.

UNDERCURRENT

Marvin Granier and Keith Curry have moved their club from Seawall to downtown. The multi-level, 15,000-square-foot space includes two bars with dance floors, a nonsmoking lounge, a game room, and Curry's art studio. 2409 Market • 409/750-8571 • www.undercurrentgalveston.com.

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.

SignOut

by Lilly Roddy

First topic for this month: Mercury, planet of communications, travel, and brain function, goes stationary direct or forward on April 12. You are free to start new projects, sign documents, or date new people after April 15. • The next topic is about the eclipses that are occurring. The Solar Eclipse, New Moon, is on April 8 at 3:32 p.m. in the sign of Aries. This will have the strongest impact on the cardinal signs, Aries, Cancer, Libra, and Capricorn, or those of you with planets in those signs. You will want to express your individuality more and will be angry with those people who won't allow that. The Lunar Eclipse, Full Moon, is on April 24, 5:06 a.m., in the sign Scorpio. This will have the strongest impact on the fixed signs, Taurus, Leo, Scorpio and Aquarius, and those of you with planets in those signs. Emotions will be running high and those of you suppressing your feelings will be releasing them from their emotional imprisonment.

ARIES (March 21–April 19). This is your birthday month, or solar return, as we say in the astrology biz. This represents a yearly cycle when you are in a review period of looking back over the past and just about ready to begin new projects. You will certainly be spurred on by the Solar Eclipse on the 8th in your sign. This is a month of new beginnings for you. But you will want to wait until after the 15th to actually start something new. Personal relationships are being tested by this eclipse. It is a time of renewal or a time to look for someone new.

GEMINI (May 21–June 21). You are feeling less cantankerous this month and are more willing to hang out with your friends and enjoy their company. If you are looking for new clients or business contacts, make sure that you are making the best use of your social skills. Old friends that you haven't seen in a while may be the best source for business contacts. You are still on the lookout for something totally new and different. Keep an eye on your finances. There is not trouble there, but you are likely to overspend if you are not careful.

CANCER (June 22–July 22). Your career energies are highlighted this month, especially with the Solar Eclipse occurring in the professional-life area of your horoscope. After the 15th, this is an excellent month for you to begin some new career goals, look for a new place to work, or seek out new clients. You have been re-evaluating your current life choices since last June, and this is the month to act on those findings. Don't forget about your romance life. This can be easily overlooked with so much energy going elsewhere.

LEO (July 23–August 22). Reviewing your past education, considering going back to school, or updating your training in your field is where you are this month. You are more optimistic than you have been in a while. After the 15th, you should follow up on these ideas. You will also be inclined



ILLUSTRATION: DAVID EDUARDO FLORES PEREZ

TAURUS (April 20–May 20). You are in a period of rest and retreat. Many of you are already avoiding crowds and too much demand on your time, and this month will increase your desire to escape from routines and social expectations. You will be feeling restless and short-tempered. By the end of the month, the Lunar Eclipse occurs, and you are feeling re-energized. You will be more motivated in your career and ready to tackle new projects that challenge you. With the eclipse, personal relationships are your area of provocation. Don't keep your feelings in, or we can expect explosions on the 24th.

to travel or to associate with people who come from a different cultural background. With the Solar Eclipse at the end of the month, the family is brought into emphasis. You will want to have a warm den to seek refuge from the daily grind. Look for moving, new interiors, or more emotional comfort from the family.

VIRGO (August 23–September 22). With your ruling planet, Mercury, in retrograde, you are cleaning up, organizing, and getting your financial affairs in order. And it couldn't come at a better time. Along with this motivation, you are getting the workplace in better shape. Relationships with co-workers could be dicey this month. There is some drama at work, and they usually look to you to make sense of it all. Because you seem to have little time for their needs, you may be missing for this part of the drama. If there are financial problems with your romantic partner, be sure to get that out in the open so it doesn't continue to cause stress.

LIBRA (September 23–October 23). This is certainly your month for relationships with the Solar Eclipse occurring there. Tensions could be running high. It may appear that your partner, either romantic or business, seems to have something she is not talking about. Open the conversation up, because she has a lot to say. Most of it is not about you, but about her desire to be more independent. Career opportunities are certainly still out there. You are rather cautious and won't make any wrong decisions.

SCORPIO (October 24–November 21). The eclipses are highlighting your work and health area as well as the personal area of self-expression.

Narcissism seems to be the theme for the workplace. Don't allow others to bully you around with their emotions. You have plenty of your own, and your ego needs airtime. Speak up and out. Family obligations may be making you feel entrapped. Take some time to get away from all of this on the weekend of the 22nd, 23rd, and 24th so that you don't blow your top. Get away to somewhere special with someone special. You really, really need the break.

SAGITTARIUS (November 22–December 21). This month is for fun and play. You are not really interested in doing anything that keeps you strapped to the desk or one location. Your body is moving faster than your brain this month. You are likely to be a bit accident-prone. If you have a creative outlet, this is the perfect month for you. If you don't, then you will have to find one that suits you. Toward the end of the month, keep an eye on your health and follow up on any doctor's visit you have.

CAPRICORN (December 22–January 19). The Solar Eclipse this month is lighting up your home and family area of your horoscope. There could be family issues that require you to add even more to your already busy schedule. Moving to a new location is not out of the question. Just make sure you are doing what is best for you and not what is best for the security for all, or you will be feeling very resentful come next October. Relationships are still unsettled. Make sure the rules fit you.

AQUARIUS (January 20–February 18). With Mars, planet of action and confrontation, in your sign, you are a force to be reckoned with. After the 15th, this is a great month to begin new projects or put yourself out there. You have more courage than usual and are more willing to take risks. The Lunar Eclipse occurs in your career sector of your horoscope. This is another reason to be pushing the limits or boundaries of your current career. You are more than ready for a new challenge. Romantic partners can be troublesome if they are too needy. You may be kicking them to the curb.

PISCES (February 19–March 20). The focus for you this month is money, personal resources, talents, and self-worth. And from the energy of last month, you are more than ready to take advantage of unexpressed or latent talents in your life. Consider going back to school or a new area of work where you can be more creative and less pliable. You will not allow others to step on your toes without some sort of recompense. Relationships are not out of the question, but there must be a lot of freedom and independence. Out-of-town partners or those who travel a lot are perfect for you this month and year.

A professional astrologer for 20 years, Lilly Roddy (www.lillyroddy.com) counsels individuals and teaches classes. Read her annual forecast, which appeared in our January issue, at www.outsmartmagazine.com.

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OUT IN HOUSTON

1 Pride Houston volunteer director **Sandy Warman** posed with a new shirt at the Jan. 28 Pride logo unveiling at 1415 California.

2 On Jan. 28, **Kofi** presented **Jim McIngvale**, Houston chair of the Bush-Clinton Tsunami Relief Fund, with the proceeds from a Jan. 20 fundraiser held at South Beach.

3 King Olympus XXXIV **Gary Evans** and Queen Olympus XXXIV **Becky Brewer** presided over the Jan. 8 Krewe of Olympus Twelfth Night party at Alliance Française de Houston.

4 **Kate Shindle** (c), star of the Alley Theatre production of *After the Fall* (and Miss America 1997), joined Alley staffers **Jennifer Garza** (l) and **Dennis Draper** at the theater's Jan. 20 Act Out night at Mingalone's.

5 On Jan. 23, Keys West crowned a new queen. The winner and runners-up (l-r): **Carol**, **Traci Lords**, Miss Keys West **An'Marie Gill**, **Shyanne**, and **Marilyn**.

6 The four authors who write under the name **Timothy James Beck**—**Timothy Forry** (l-r), **Jim Carter**, and Houstonians **Timothy J. Lambert** and **Becky Cochrane**—signed copies of their new novel *I'm Your Man* at Borders River Oaks on Jan. 15.

7 The Krewe of Olympus Twelfth Night crowd included (l-r) **Sesa Edgar**, **Sherri Akard**, **Marianne Huerter**, and **Annie Couch**. Krewe beneficiaries include Lesbian Health Initiative.

8 **Judy Reeves** (far r) directed *The Eighth Order*, which opened at Theatre Suburbia on Jan. 13. The cast (front, l-r): **Sabrina Tarbutton**, **Suzanne King**, and **Cory Grabenstein**; (back, l-r) assistant director **Laura Schlecht**, **Brenda Kuciemba**, **Rick Adamus-Delgado**, and **Rebecca Pipas-Seabrook**. The first-night performance was a benefit for Colt 45's Houston.

9 At the Jan. 29 Montrose Soccer Club meeting, **Michael Moore** (l) welcomed **Lynda LeClair**, **Kristen Kemp**, **Kevin Taylor**, and **Sara Rice** at Hollywood Café.

10 On Feb. 2, **Phyllis Randolph Frye** held a meeting at Nechman, Simoneaux & Frye (where she is a partner) to discuss the future of the Houston transgender community. Attending: **Rose Wall**, **Sandy O'Daniel**, **Tina Allen**, **Brenda Thomas**, **Frye**, **Tamara Frankowski**, and **Hana Michelle Pinard**. The meeting was part of the planning process for the Conference on Houston's LGBT Future, scheduled for June.



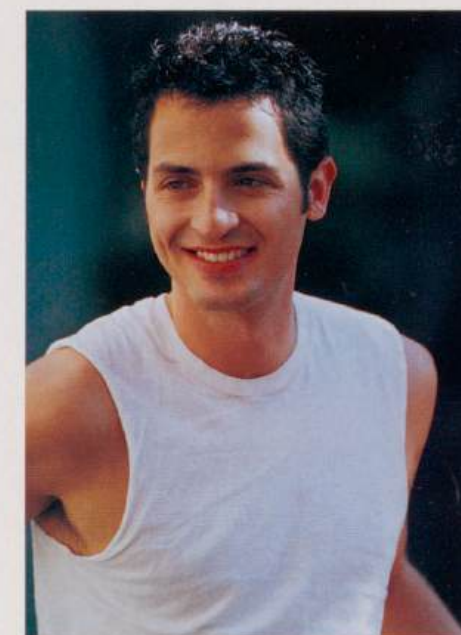
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