

Out▼Smart

APRIL 2006

The once
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Morgenstern
chats about
her remarkable
career and her
staunch support
of equal rights
for all, including
gay marriage

*Valerie
Harper*

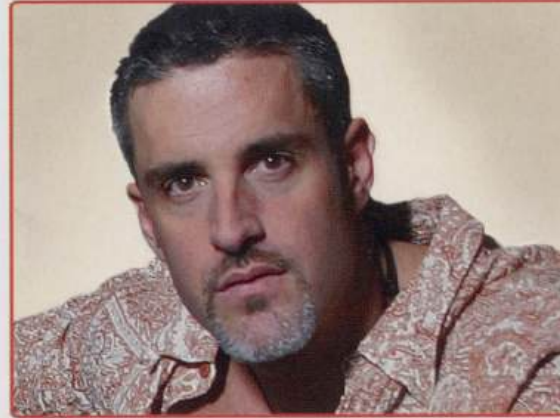
PLUS
CRAIG CHESTER
on Adam and Steve
FELICIA BRADFORD
tees up for golf tourney
LADY BUNNY hops to Houston

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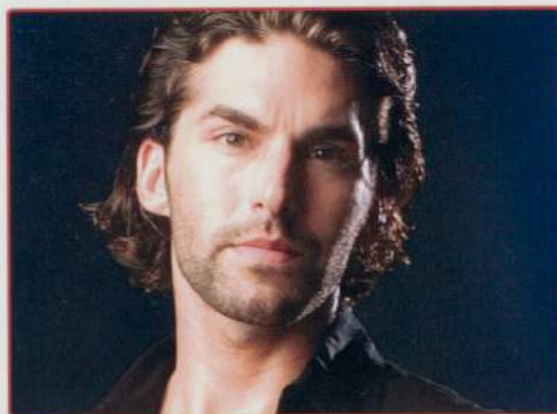
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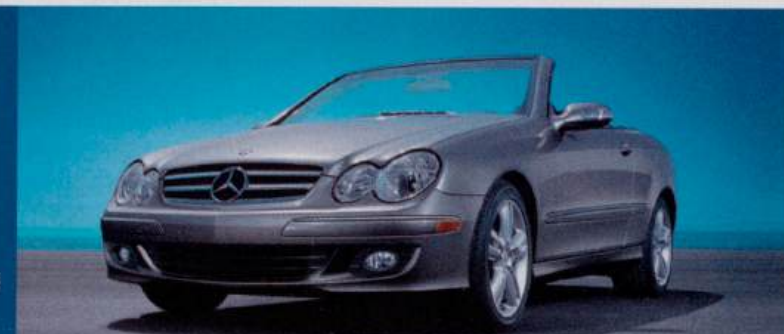
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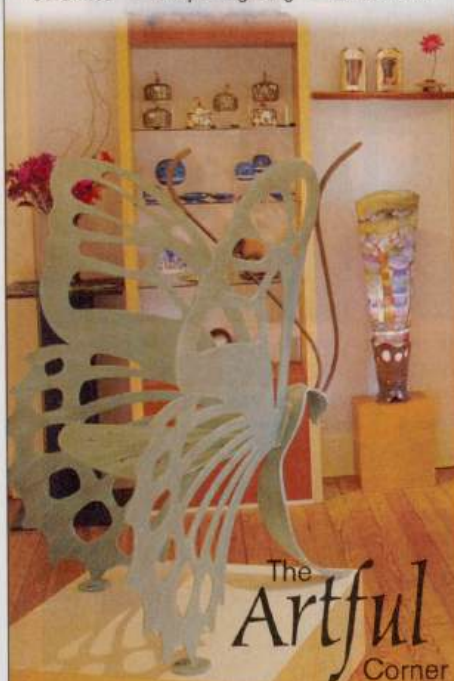
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About the cover:

Valerie Harper, in Houston for *Golda's Balcony*, is interviewed on page 26. Photo courtesy Valerie Harper • Design: Blase DiStefano

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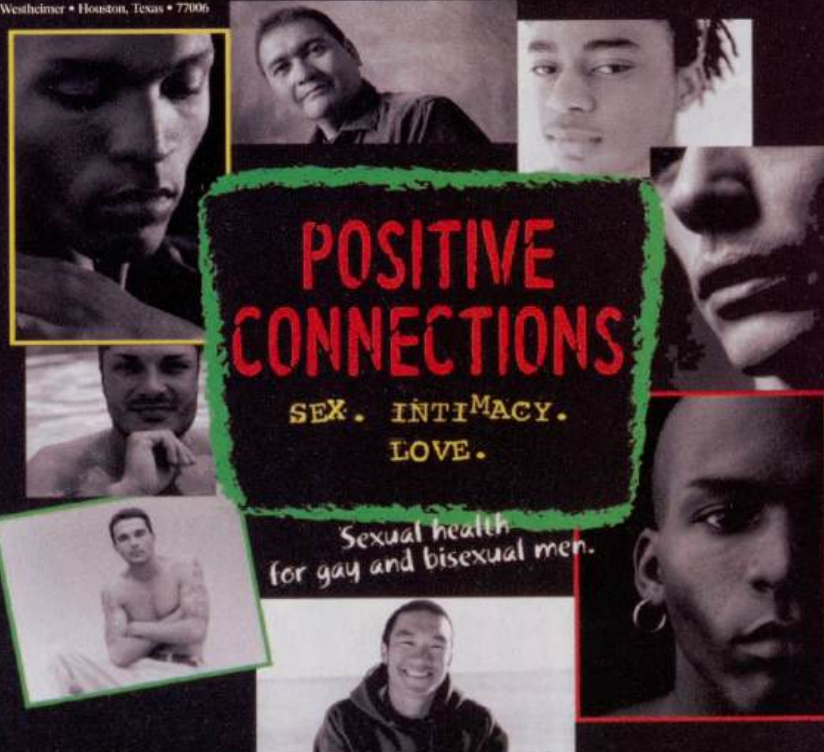
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Letters

LEGAL EASE

Thank you for "Getting Legal" [February 2006]. Hopefully, everyone in long-term relationships (or hoping to be) will read this article carefully and protect themselves legally as much as possible. We must remember that the far right is trying everything to do away with our legal rights as gays and particularly our rights as committed gay partners.

Your publication continues to astound me with the quality of its articles and its news coverage of developments of importance to gays. I always make it a point to pick up a copy when I visit Houston. I just wish you were readily available in Austin!

Claude M. Gruener
Austin

EDITOR'S NOTE: In Austin, OutSmart is currently available at the offices of Equality Texas (formerly known as the Lesbian/Gay Rights Lobby of Texas) and the GLBTA Affairs agency at the University of Texas.

IN THE SHADOWS

We are very happy to report the first year of our calendar project, Shadows, was very successful. Because of countless friends like you, we were able to see our dream come true: to print a beautiful, tasteful calendar ["OutFront," November 2006] that featured tasteful photo images and raise funds for a community charity. As a result of our endeavors, we were able to raise \$3,200 for the Houston Buyer's Club in our first year!

We look forward to the calendar project for 2007, and are happy to report the recipient of funds raised next year will be Camp Hope. This project is run by the AIDS Foundation Houston and provides a summer camp for children living with HIV.

Besides all of our friends in the community who helped, we are especially grateful to Charles Armstrong and his staff. Without their never-ending support, we would not have had such a successful project. Working on a project like this has made us proud to be a part of the Houston GLBT community.

David Lewis, David Lewis Images
Rob Tomlin, Vilven Design Graphics
Houston

EDITOR'S NOTE: David Lewis is a contributing photographer for OutSmart.

COLUMNISTS SEARCH

OutSmart is searching for a new "LookOut" columnist. Writers interested in compiling a monthly column about community events, with an emphasis on nonprofit and fundraising activities, may contact editor Tim Brookover at editor@outsmartmagazine.com. No phone calls, please.

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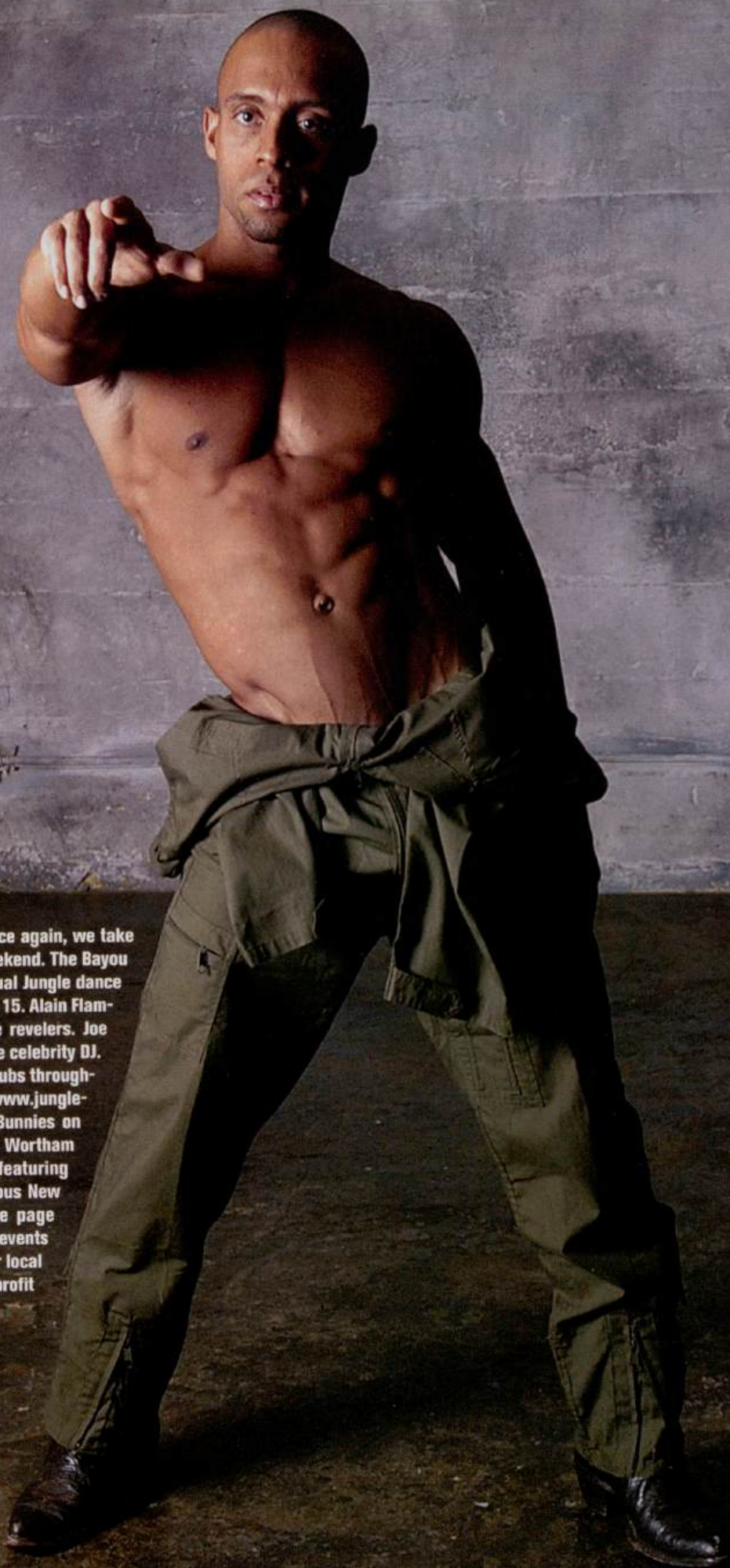
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GO DOWNTOWN. Once again, we take over downtown on Easter weekend. The Bayou City Boys Club brings its annual Jungle dance bash to The Meridian on April 15. Alain Flam- bert (pictured) is one of the revelers. Joe Gauthreaux of New York is the celebrity DJ. Other parties take place at clubs through- out the weekend (schedule: www.jungle- houston.com). On April 16, Bunnies on the Bayou rocks the plaza at Wortham Center and Buffalo Bayou, featuring the DJ skills of another famous New Yorker, the Lady Bunny (see page 54). Most importantly, both events raise thousands of dollars for local HIV/AIDS and community nonprofit organizations.

Photographed by David Lewis



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WHEELS ACROSS

TEXAS. On April 22 and 23, Sylvia Perez will ride in the MS 150 Houston-to-Austin cycling event for the seventh year. Perez, a hairdresser with the L'Esprit salon, remembers that she didn't train for her first ride and even had to borrow a bike. "Not only did I finish, I finished in pretty respectable time." Perez rides for two Pedal Partners, people in her life with multiple sclerosis: her best friend's brother and another good friend, and she is one of the top fundraisers (pledge: www.ms150.org). Perez's benefit efforts for multiple sclerosis research don't end with the MS 150. On May 20, she will host a 3-6 p.m. fundraiser at EJ's.

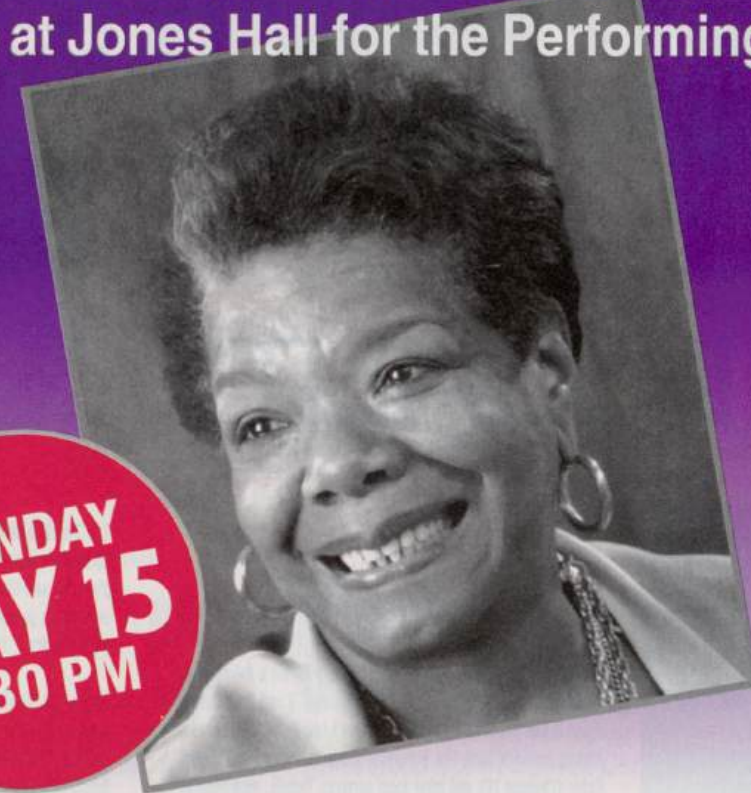
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News Briefs



The logo for the July 15-22 Gay Games VII in Chicago.



Having a ball: Lone Star Volleyball Association members (standing, l-r) Gary Grier, Ricci Chambers, Rick Talley, Mike Muna, (kneeling, l-r) Mark Ware, and Clayton Daniels will participate in the Lone Star Volleyball Classic VII on April 14 and 15.



The logo for Equality Texas (formerly Lesbian/Gay Rights Lobby).

DATEBOOK

Just in time for spring, City Controller Annise Parker's **Monday Matters** program on the Municipal Channel, 2 and 8 a.m. and 2 and 8 p.m. Monday, focuses on a tour of new Buffalo Bayou developments in April. The Municipal Channel airs on Time Warner Cable (Channel 16) and other local services. Details: www.houstoncontroller.org.

So *Brokeback Mountain* inspired you to make your own queer love story (maybe one with a happy ending)? Two classes in the **Southwest Alternate Media Project** workshop series can jump-start those dreams: On Apr. 8, Kit Candler and Stacy Schoolfield of Storie Productions offer Developing Scripts for Low-Budget Features, 9 a.m.-2 p.m., at Houston Community College Town & Country, \$50, \$40 SWAMP members/students. On May 13, native Houstonian and independent producer Mark Stolaroff, instructor at the No Budget Film School in Los Angeles (and once managing director of Curtains Theater here), offers No-Budget Film School, a 10 a.m.-5 p.m. class at Rice University Media Center, \$150, \$125 SWAMP members/students. Reservations: www.swamp.org.

Lone Star Volleyball Association welcomes 48 teams from across North America for the Lone Star Classic Volleyball Classic VII Apr. 14-15 at Willowbrook Sports Complex. Event proceeds benefit Camp Hope. Details: www.lsva.org.

Party like it's 1991 at the 15th anniversary Spring Iniquity XV weekend, Apr. 14-15, hosted by **National Leather Association**.

tion: Houston. The theme: A Day at the Baths. Registration is Apr. 13, 8 p.m., at The Ripcord. \$30. Details: Daddy Rose, DaddyRose3925@aol.com.

Free your inner jock at **Queer Bingo** on Apr. 15, 6 p.m., at Club 1415. Athletics is the theme of this month's game night hosted by Houston GLBT Community Center. \$15. Details: 713/524-3818, www.houstonglbtcommunitycenter.org.

Houston Transgender Unity Committee presents the first Peggy Rudd Transgender Scholarships ("Legacy of Learning," April 2004 *OutSmart*) at the annual Unity Banquet on Apr. 15, 6:30 p.m., at the Westchase Hilton. \$60. Details: www.houstontransgenderunity.org.



GLBT teens ages 14-19 who participate in all 13 sessions of Interactive Program About Drugs at **Montrose Counseling Center**, which begins Apr. 21, will receive an iPod Nano (left). Hence, the snappy name: IPAD for an iPod. Sessions are 5:30 p.m. Friday and 4:30 p.m. Sunday, through June 2. Bonus: Pizza is served. Register: Deb Murphy, 713/529-0037, ext. 353.

The **Texas legislature** convenes on Apr. 17 for yet another special session to hash out a public-school funding plan. There are no plans for anti-GLBT legislation, but in the right-wing-dominated Capitol anything is possible. Equality Texas (the new name for the Lesbian/Gay Rights Lobby of Texas) monitors. Details: www.equalitytexas.org.

On Apr. 24, **Holocaust Museum Houston** hosts the citywide commemoration of Yom HaShoah, the international day of Holocaust remembrance, with a 7 p.m. service at Congregation Beth Yeshurun. Details: 713/942-8000, www.hmh.org.

We don't mean to imply that any of our readers are ogres, but we will point out that **Texas Renaissance Festival** holds auditions on Apr. 29 for the New Market ogre for the Sept. 30-Nov. 19 event. Don't have the right stuff to be an ogre? The festival holds auditions for character actors and specialty acts on May 20 and May 27. Appointments: Jeff Baldwin, 800/458-3435.

Planning to ogle the good-looking jocks at **Gay Games VII** in Chicago? Tickets are now on sale, including duckets for the July 15 opening ceremony at Soldiers Field and the July 22 closing ceremony at Wrigley Field. \$50 and up for those events. Tickets: www.gaygameschicago.org.

One saucy anecdote in the new Marlon Brando biography involves Brando and Laurence Olivier smooching in a pool while Olivier's then-wife Vivien Leigh was in the house. Well, Marlon isn't present in the backstage comedy **Orson's Shadow** at the Alley Theatre through Apr. 30, but Larry and Viv are, along with Orson Welles. Go for the subtext. \$41 and up. Tickets: 713/228-8481, www.alleytheatre.org.

More: www.outsmartmagazine.com

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MOLLY SPEAKS



Writer Molly Ivins, one of the most prominent pundit voices from the left, speaks in Houston on April 17 at Wortham Center. Ivins, who recently announced she is once again battling cancer, appears as part of the Progressive Forum, Houston speaker series. Tickets: 713/315-2525, Details: www.progressiveforumhouston.org

KINDRED SPIRITS RETURNS



For the fifth year, Marion Coleman and friends revisit the glory years of the legendary local women's club Kindred Spirits (1980-1989) with a reunion evening on April 29 at the Hornberger Center. As Jacquelyn Hedden wrote for us in 2002: "For almost a decade, Kindred Spirits was the premier place for women to meet and socialize in a safe, upscale environment. Be-

sides its reputation as a 'community bar' where everyone knew your name, it gave back to both men and women by raising awareness and providing support where it was needed most. Kindred Spirits was more than just a bar—it was a community phenomenon worth remembering" ("Those Were the Days, My Friend," March 2002 *OutSmart*). Joining Coleman (c), owner of the House of Coleman printing firm, in celebrating the club are event committee members Anna Fornaris (l) and Deb Gebhardt, photographed at the Kindred Spirits Celebration in 2005. Other committee members are Marlene Caldwell, Trudy Denny, Cindy Durham, Nancy Ford, Sally Huffer, Tricia Lynn, Iris Rodriguez, Renee Tappe, Hillary Woest, and Judy Woods. Terry Flores of Bocado's serves as DJ for the evening, presented by A Christmas Songfest. Tickets: \$25 at the door, \$20 in advance. Proceeds benefit AssistHers, Bering Support Network, Houston Buyers Club, and Lesbian Health Initiative.

PRIDE DUBS MARSHALS

On March 2, Pride Houston announced the grand marshals for the June 24 GLBT Pride Parade at reception at Guava Lamp: female grand marshal Phyllis Randolph Frye; honorary grand marshal Rev. Marilyn Meeker-Williams; male grand marshal Ray Ramirez; and Christian Rogers, president of Bunnies on the Bayou, honorary marshal (organization).



SWOOPES GOES CLUBBING

During Houston Splash weekend, Comets star Sheryl Swoopes will open a new downtown club, Swoopes 22 Sports Bar and Nightclub. Partners in the venture include Deidre Sam, owner of House of Finesse private-events facility, and Traxx Nightclub Management LLC. The grand opening of the GLBT-friendly club, located at 2020 Leeland, is May 3 at 5 p.m., a post-game party following the Comets' first pre-



season game against the Charlotte Sting. Opening-weekend events include a "surprise celebrity appearance" on Friday and the 2006 Black Pageant and Social Event, a Houston Splash celebration, on Sunday. Swoopes, an Olympic gold medalist and WNBA MVP, came out in an ESPN The Magazine interview published last October. Read about life six months after her public announcement in the May *OutSmart*.

HOUSTON MAKES A SPLASH

Houston Splash, the massive annual Black Pride celebration, returns May 2-8. Highlights include:

- *Sapience Magazine* co-hosts the welcome reception on May 5 in the Urban Lounge at the Four Points Sheraton.
- There is a Him.4.Him Kick-Off Party at The Meridian and a Her.4.Her Kick-Off Party at Club Toyz on May 5.
- Fresh Start Church hosts the Revolution Worship Celebration on May 7 at the Four Points Sheraton.
- May 7 is also the day of the famous all-day Beach Party on East Beach in Galveston.
- Bartini hosts the Sunday Soiree on May 7, and Rich's hosts the Southern Beach After-Party Show.

Details: www.houstonsplash.com

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BE AFRAID

The Bush administration's steady diet of fear backfires with the Dubai deal

Since September 11, 2001, the Bush White House has systematically exploited the tragedy of the 9/11 attacks for either political gain or for the unprecedented raw exercise of executive power at the expense of the other co-equal branches of government. It has done so by a single method: the pervasive pumping of fear into the American psyche.

Initially, it was almost purely political. Bush specifically, and Republicans generally, accused Democrats of being soft on terror to gain congressional seats in 2002 and to regain the White House in 2004. Democrats served as the perfect foils, too timid to speak up against the excessive breadth of the Patriot Act or the authorization for the war in Iraq.

America was, literally, under attack. And Democrats who breathed the words "civil liberties" were instantly drowned out by charges that they were unpatriotic or

were soft on fighting terror. Karl Rove, the president's strategist-in-chief, said it this way: "Liberals saw the savagery of the 9/11 attacks and wanted to prepare indictments and offer therapy and understanding for our attackers." Conservatives, he said, "saw the savagery of 9/11 and the attacks and prepared for war."

Of course, Rove's charge that liberals are soft on terror ignored the fact that Democrats were virtually unanimous in supporting Bush in congressional votes on his response to the 9/11 attacks, his decision to invade Afghanistan, and even his decision to go to war in Iraq. Indeed, the Patriot Act drew only one "no" vote in the entire Senate, from Russell Feingold, the Wisconsin Democrat. On paper, Democrats and Republicans were united in the War on Terror, and their votes reflect it.

Years have passed since 9/11. And during those years, the American public has been

fed a steady diet of fear, fear, fear. Bush has governed by using fear as an excuse for his unprecedented exercise of executive power. According to Bush, invading Iraq was necessary to make us safer. Incarcerating thousands of detainees in Guantanamo, without naming or charging them, was necessary to make us safer. Devising and maintaining secret prisons around the world for the interrogation of terror suspects was necessary to make us safer. Flouting current wiretapping laws and secretly taping U.S. citizens' phone conversations, without first obtaining a warrant, was necessary to make us safer.

Since 9/11, Bush has repeatedly ignored international law, the Constitution, and the separate and co-equal branches of government (Congress and the courts) as he has systematically engaged in a secret "I'm the President and I know best" approach to keeping America safe from another terrorist attack.

continued on page 20

PRICE OF A POLICY

A study reveals the staggering financial cost of Don't Ask, Don't Tell

A new study from the University of California estimates the financial costs of the Don't Ask, Don't Tell policy, under which more than 10,000 gay service members have been discharged since 1994. The total estimated cost of about \$363 million for the first 10 years of the policy (1994–2003) is a low-ball estimate, according to the study. While that figure is not much in relation to the gargantuan federal budget of \$2.7 trillion annually, any amount spent on excluding otherwise eligible Americans who want to serve—especially in wartime—is a waste of taxpayers' money.

The report breaks down the financial cost of firing service members for homosexuality under Don't Ask, Don't Tell into four discrete categories: recruiting costs for enlisted service members; training costs for enlisted service members; training costs for officers; and separation travel costs. Let's take a look at each of these:

• **Recruiting costs for enlisted service members fired for homosexuality: \$79.2 million.**

The military spends a lot of money to recruit. Some of this money is spent to recruit service members who are eventually fired for homosexuality. In a February 2005 report tellingly titled "Financial Costs and Loss of Critical Skills Due to DOD's Homosexual Conduct Policy Cannot Be Completely Estimated," the congressional General Accounting Office (GAO) estimated these costs attributable to Don't Ask, Don't Tell at \$95.4 million. The University of California commission actually revised this estimate downward to account for value the military recouped through time served by service members before discharge.

• **Training costs for enlisted service members fired for homosexuality: \$252.3 million.** Once the military recruits a person for service, it invests even more heavily in both basic and initial skills training. The GAO

estimated the cost of training recruits fired for homosexuality to be \$95.1 million.

This is almost certainly a large underestimate of the cost of training these recruits, for a couple of reasons. First, the GAO number does not reflect training costs for Marines discharged for homosexuality (since the Marines apparently did not provide GAO with training estimates). Second, even the GAO's training cost figures for the other services are substantially lower than the GAO's own previous estimates of training costs and estimates available in other public sources. The University of California commission corrected the GAO figures by relying on the Defense Department's and GAO's own previous figures for both basic and initial skills training for each of the branches. After that, the commission again credited the military for recovering at least a part of this cost through the members' service before discharge. →

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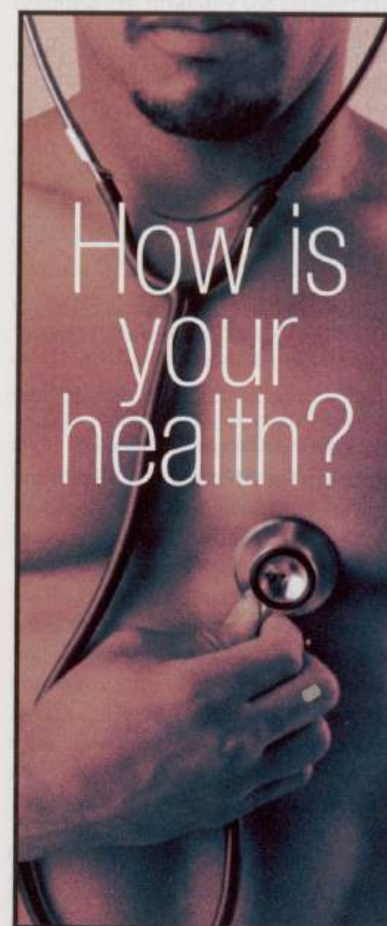
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LeftOut continued from page 18

Bush's strategy has worked. The American public has gotten the message. Over time, Americans have become reconciled with the concept that it is acceptable to negotiate away some of our precious civil liberties for the promise that if we do we will be safer. We have conceded that it is okay that the Patriot Act permits the federal government to see what books we check out at the library, what Google searches we have run, and even permits government infiltration of Quaker meetings. While this may all seem ridiculous, most Americans have accepted it as a trade-off for the promise that doing so will help to make us safe.

Finally, all of the fear the Bush administration has pumped into the American psyche has taken hold. That happened when Bush told us that his administration had authorized the outsourcing of the running of American ports and, implicitly, port security, to a Dubai-based company—a company from a Middle Eastern country with ties to 9/11.

In response to that disclosure, America collectively freaked out. While Bush tried to reassure Americans that all was well, America remained afraid. While Bush said, "Trust me," Americans said, "No way." Bush's approval rating hit 37 percent. Democrats smelled blood. Republicans capitulated and turned on their own president. And the Dubai deal died.

Bush was stunned. He scolded that America was "sending the wrong message" to the world by opposing the deal and hinted that the nation was being xenophobic.

Having been fed a steady diet of fear, America responded by being afraid. That actually stunned the president who taught us all to be afraid. And that is scary.

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

• **Training costs for officers: \$17.7 million.** The GAO report did not factor the cost of training officers into its report. In the first 10 years of Don't Ask, Don't Tell, 137 officers were discharged for homosexuality.

The university commission estimated the cost of training for officers who go through one of five different routes: service academies (like West Point), ROTC, officer candidate school, direct appointment, and other paths.

• **Separation travel costs: \$14.3 million.** Recruiting and training costs are front-end. They occur at the beginning of a military career. There are also costs associated with separation from the military, the back-end

of service. These "out-processing" costs are numerous and are also investments the military must make when it discharges a member. One such cost is travel expense. The commission estimated this cost of Don't Ask, Don't Tell by using the Army's own lower-range estimates for such travel costs, and deducting for recovery of costs through time served.

Putting all these numbers together, we arrive at a total cost of \$363,770,279 to implement Don't Ask, Don't Tell during its first 10 years.

Several factors suggest that the commission estimate is still a substantial underestimate of the real financial cost of expelling gay service members. First, the commission could not get numbers estimating the costs of discharge review boards, security clearances, out-processing costs, investigations into service members' sexual orientation, re-enlistment bonuses, and officer recruiting. Second, the estimates of officer training are probably much lower than the actual cost. The types of officers fired for homosexuality include physicians, pilots, dentists, and other individuals with high-cost technical training. Third, the estimate does not include the cost of losing gay service members who refuse to re-enlist after fulfilling their service obligations because they are unwilling to continue to conceal. Fourth, the estimates for enlisted training are probably too conservative.

On the other hand, the commission does not attempt to calculate the cost of recruiting and training service members who might disdain military service if the ban is lifted. I doubt this would be a large cost, since open homosexuals would represent such a tiny portion of the military services, and whatever the initial cost it could be expected to dwindle as military culture adjusted. The experience of other countries does not indicate any recruitment and retention difficulties attributable to allowing service by openly gay service members.

Finally, "financial costs" alone do not measure all the costs—in broken careers, broken lives, broken families, in the loss of dignity for gay Americans in general—of having a policy that expels Americans who want to serve their country simply because we learn they're gay. But we cannot have a debate over the costs and benefits of Don't Ask, Don't Tell without at least a reasonable baseline estimate of the financial costs. For that reason, the University of California commission has made what appears to be a useful and important contribution to the debate.

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

ARE YOU GAY ENOUGH?

Candidates face the question of how out is out

I have been alternately angered, bemused, and intrigued by a recent article and some letters (in another community publication) that criticize both City Council member Sue Lovell and many other openly gay/lesbian elected officials for not being out enough, either in their campaigns or as officeholders. To me, the debate reveals both a startling naiveté about electoral politics and a sad willingness to trap our officeholders in a Catch 22, and it betrays a clear double standard.

The author used the candidates endorsed by the Gay and Lesbian Victory Fund as his subject. This is a reasonable starting place, as the Victory Fund will only endorse candidates who self-declare as openly GLBT. But then the author attempted to judge, apparently largely from candidate or officeholder websites, whether they were sufficiently out. If they didn't state their sexual orientation on public information or

make it a central theme of their campaigns, they flunked the test.

Let me state my own credentials: In my 1997 City Council race, my campaign website and virtually all campaign material had the words gay or lesbian on them, usually a reference to my service as president of the Gay and Lesbian Political Caucus (now GLBT, of course). As both a council member and city controller, my official city webpage has also always featured that fact, as well as a reference to my spouse, Kathy Hubbard. I put it there to make a statement and because I believe our community deserves it. (Of course, I also write this monthly column, which appears in a GLBT magazine.)

However, in my race for controller, you would have been hard pressed to find any gay reference on any campaign literature. It was never mentioned during the campaign by me or by my opponents. Why? Because it

had nothing to do with the office I was seeking. So did I go back into the closet? Does that make me suddenly not gay enough?

What does "out" mean?

When I began my winning campaign in 1997, I had been a lesbian activist for 20 years. I had been not just openly gay but publicly gay, often quoted in newspapers and was certainly the most visible lesbian in Houston. In some senses, I was as "out" as any candidate could be. My spouse likes to say we are not only out of the closet but also out on the front lawn.

An initial poll, however, showed that my name identification was only 5 percent at the beginning of the campaign. So 95 percent of Houston's voters didn't know who I was, or that I was a lesbian.

Politics 101: This was as much an opportunity as a liability. I had control over my image. If you don't get the message out

on your own terms, your opponent is going to get it out on his/her terms.

Putting it in context

Unlike many candidates, being a lesbian activist was part of my résumé. I had headed Houston's GLBT political organization, taught at the police academy on GLBT issues, and served as a GLBT community liaison to the police department. This work was as much a qualification as being a civic club president and a small-business owner.

Politics 101: Make being honest about who you are a plus. African-American voters appreciated my work as a critic of the police department, even though it wasn't on their issues. The police union endorsed me because they knew me and knew I understood their job.

Even if my gay activism was part of my résumé, it couldn't become the dominant feature of my campaign. In previous campaigns, the local media used lesbian or gay as an adjective every time my name appeared in print (as in "lesbian activist Annise Parker stated..."). I clearly wasn't ashamed of it—I was mentioning it myself. But we met with both GLBT and mainstream media and pointed out that my opponents were referred to by profession, not sexual orientation, and that I expected the same.

Politics 101: Packaging matters. Even well-intentioned reporters can get lazy or look for a "hook." It's a standard tactic to reprint literature from other sources referencing your opponent. Why help them with a headline that makes you seem a single-issue candidate?

Why bring it up at all?

I've heard many peers say, "I'm a candidate who happens to be gay, not a gay candidate. I won't be legislating on gay issues. Why should I even bring it up?"

Politics 101: Others are talking about it, even if you aren't. Attempts to be coy make you sound dishonest and may alienate your base. Again, if you don't get the message out on your own terms, your opponent is going to get it out on his/her terms. If you mention it, no matter how peripherally, you can't be outed. Besides, our community deserves it.

The gay agenda

But, whether or not the accusation is made to your face, you will be suspected of being a "single issue" candidate pushing the mythic "gay agenda." If you are open about gay issues in your campaign, the charge will be overt.

Politics 101: Build a track record that shows a range of experience and commitment. If your qualifications can speak for themselves, they will. But you still can't let yourself be publicly defined by gay issues. →

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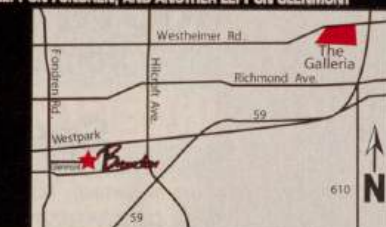
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InsideOut continued from page 22

For some, I will never be out enough. For others, I will be too out. Our toughest critics are often in our own communities.

Any representative of a minority group, in whatever field, feels the pressure of being a "first" and knows that he or she will be held up as an example or role model. There are still so few of us in elected office that I do feel the impact of the actions of my peers. When they're judged, some part of that reflects on me. We will be held to a higher standard.

But I know there is no one right way for our GLBT elected leaders to address this issue. What the Victory Fund asks is simple: that we are willing to self-declare in seeking their endorsement and that we are comfortable in discussing it and willing to be honest when the issue is raised. Supporting openly GLBT men and women when they run for office is critical for the future of our community. And perhaps so is cutting them a little slack on this issue.

Annise Parker is city controller and the highest-ranking openly GLBT elected municipal official in any of the 10 largest U.S. cities. On November 8, she was re-elected to a second term. Her website is www.houstoncontroller.org. Parker's television program, Money Matters, airs Monday on the Municipal Channel (TimeWarner Cable 16) at 2 and 8 a.m. and 2 and 8 p.m.

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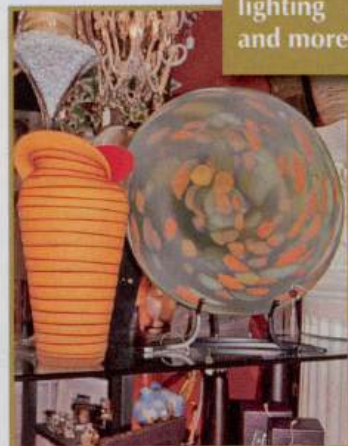
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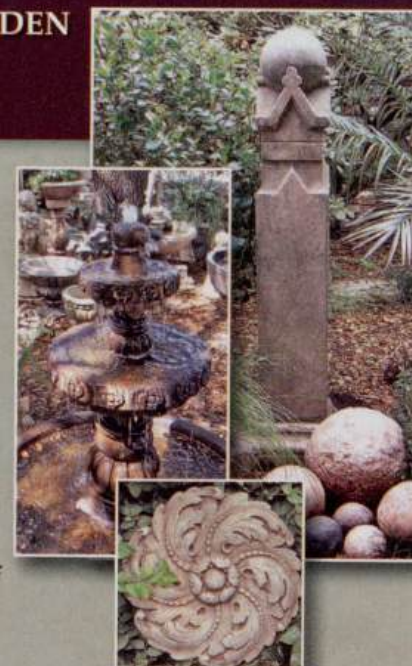
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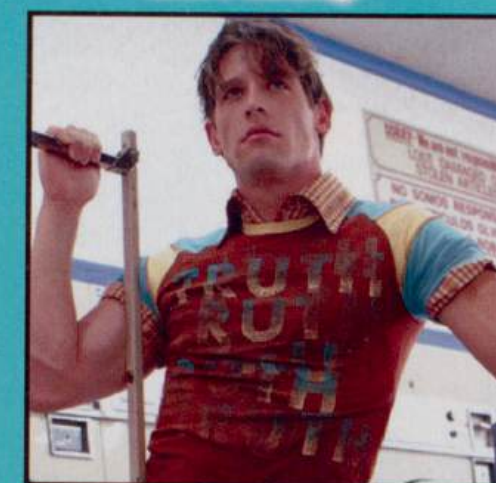
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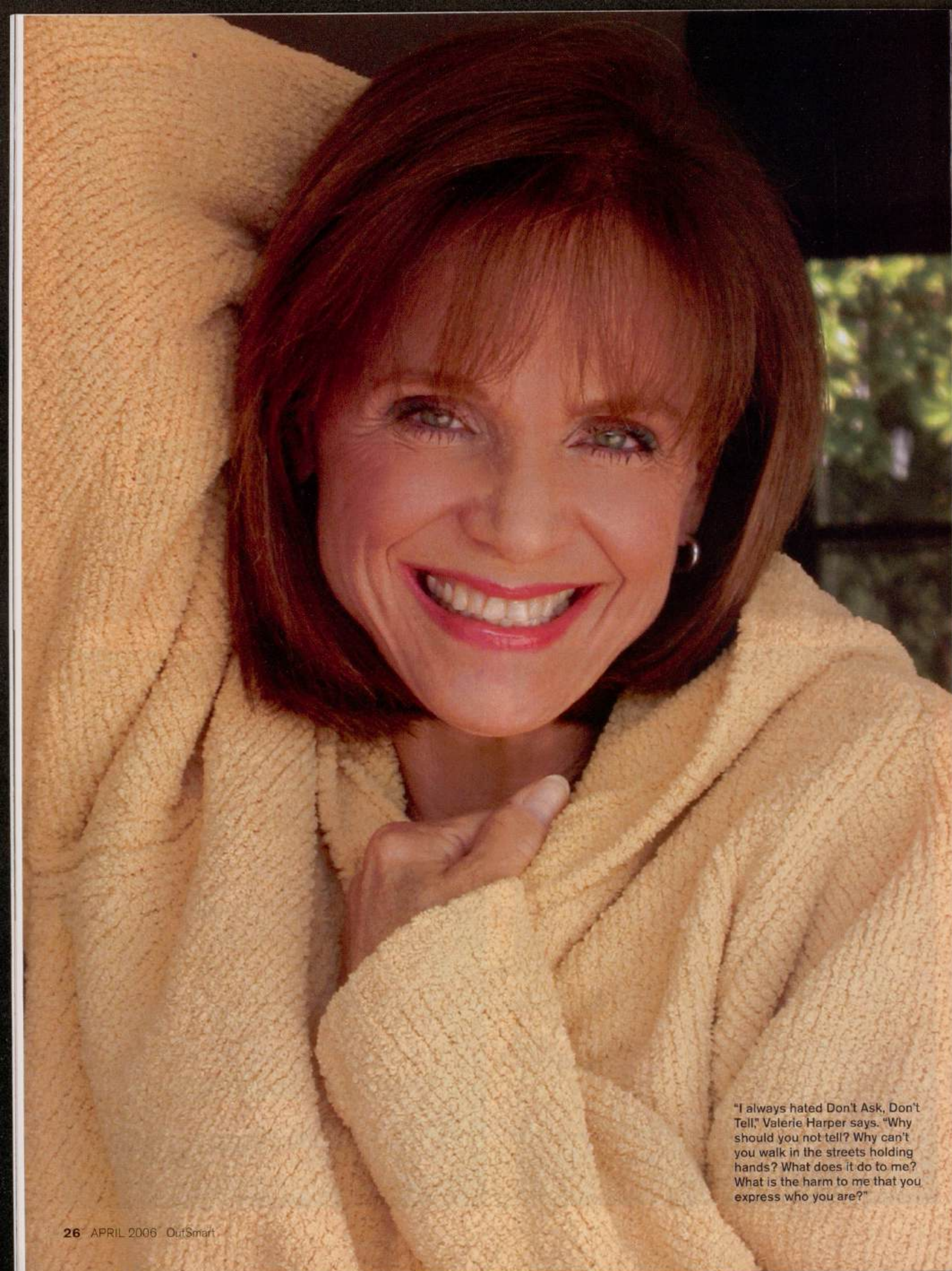


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"I always hated Don't Ask, Don't Tell," Valerie Harper says. "Why should you not tell? Why can't you walk in the streets holding hands? What does it do to me? What is the harm to me that you express who you are?"

From Rhoda to Golda

Valerie Harper, probably best known as Mary Richards's neighbor, returns to Houston in the role of Israeli prime minister Golda Meir. She chats with us about gay marriage, Brokeback Mountain, Paul Newman's baby blues, her chorus girl past, and much more

by Blase DiStefano

Photo courtesy Valerie Harper

Remember Rhoda Morgenstern, Mary's wacky upstairs neighbor on *The Mary Tyler Moore Show*? And the spin-off show, *Rhoda*? Though Valerie Harper is probably best known for that Jewish role (she won four Emmys and a Golden Globe), she was born to a mixed Catholic/Protestant family. And she's now back to playing Jewish, this time as Golda Meir in *Golda's Balcony*, playing in Houston this month. • The 65-year-old, very gay-friendly actress talked with me for 45 minutes while on her cell phone in her car (as a passenger—her daughter Cristi was driving). She was intelligent, funny, outspoken, and ditzy, all at the same time. →

Blase DiStefano: Hi Valerie.

Valerie Harper: Hi Blase. [*Dogs bark.*] I have two geriatric dogs in the car. To tell you the truth, our house is being fumigated because of an ant invasion.

Oops.

We have a lovely place in Santa Monica, but it is an ant haven. I think it's because it got very cold, then very hot, and then very cold again. The little fellas are probably freezing their butts, so they all came tracking into my house. It's a spraying. We didn't have to fumigate or cover the house or anything. But the dogs can't be there for four hours.

Have you always had pets?

Actually, no. I used to be afraid of dogs because I was bitten when I was young, but now I have had dogs for the last 25 years or so with [husband Tony Cacciotti].

So how long have you been together?

We've been together since 1979. We married in 1986 because we were adopting our beautiful daughter [Cristina] who is now in her early 20s. She is gorgeous, and she is with me right now. She's in the bank. I didn't want to miss these interviews just because I couldn't stay in the house. That's why I'm calling you instead of you calling me. If we drop out on this cell phone, I'll call you right back.

OK.

As a matter of fact, I'm going to turn the car on. I think that will be a good idea so that some power is coming through. [*Dinging sound in background*] Oh, no, then we're going to have all this noise. What is happening? Oh, I know, take the brake off. [*Dinging stops*] That's it. OK. We're cool. Now it's good. I'm going to run this so we get electricity. OK.

How about we start with theater, of which you're no stranger. Weren't you a dancer on Broadway in *Li'l Abner*?

Li'l Abner was my first show. Then I did a show called *Take Me Along* with Jackie Gleason. Little did I know that I would be working with these legends and then later be in television series as they were. Then I did a show called *Destry Rides Again*. Andy Griffith was the star, but I didn't open with that because I got hepatitis. Then I did another show, *Wildcat*, with Lucille Ball. My last show was *Subways Are for Sleeping*.

Did you just dance in all of these?

No. I was singing and dancing, and sometimes I had a few lines; mainly a chorus performer. All the time I was taking acting lessons. I was working in the theater but trying not to stay in the chorus. Then I finally turned down a chorus job for a show called *Here's Love*. Michael Kidd was the choreographer. I turned it down. It was hard to do, because I wanted to do it. I thought, *If I'm going to be an actress, I've got to really focus on that*, and I did. Later on I got into Second City.

You also did the movie *Li'l Abner*. I watched it with a friend, and he said, "That has to be Valerie Harper."

That was right after the play. I was 19 then. Some of the girls just had hair—I had a hat

How dare anyone say, "Would you please pervert your life? Would you please be uncomfortable? Would you please rip your guts out and diminish your soul and live falsely for my comfort?"

on with a daisy, and I had braids like Pippi Longstocking sticking out on each side of my head.

[Laughs]

My roommate was Beth Howland. Do you remember Beth, the waitress [Vera] from *Alice* [the TV series]?

Yes.

We were roommates when we did that movie together. Two little stupid virgins in Hollywood, taking the bus to Paramount. I'm telling you the truth. In those days girls were virgins until they were 20. I don't know if that happens any more.

You had a part in *Rock Rock Rock*.

That was way back. I was 15. It was rock-and-roll performers strung together one after another. Little Richard, Chuck Berry, Martha and the Vandellas. All of the current 1950s people. 1956, I guess it was. I was a dance student, and we went to an audition and they said, "Who can jitterbug?" A girlfriend and I schlepped out on the train to Brooklyn to some strange little studio, and we were in the

movie. Now it's like a cult thing. A time warp with our crinolines. The star was Tuesday Weld. She was only 13.

You've worked with a slew of other famous people. Does any performer or any show at all really stand out when you look back?

One time that was absolutely so satisfying was *Shadow Box*. Paul Newman directed. He's marvelous and completely distracting. I would be listening, and I'd think, *Holy F, look at those eyes*. How are they glacier looking, translucent crystal, and yet so warm and beautiful? Joanne [Woodward, Newman's wife] was there. I didn't lust after him . . . it was just distractingly gorgeous. Beautiful beyond anything you can imagine. You know who has eyes like that and she doesn't get credit? Barbra Streisand. I don't know if it's Russian Jewish or what it is, but it's blue, blue, blue, blue, blue.

My daughter said I'm talking too loud. She just came back from the bank.

You've worked with a lot of gay people too, including Sandy Dennis and Raymond Burr, and I've always been curious . . .

Raymond, yes, fabulous. Now Sandy was a doll. Boy, did I love her. Super. I didn't know she was gay. Was she openly gay?

Not until much later.

I see.

I've always been curious when working on a project, about how often would you say that another person's sexual orientation even comes up, or does it?

It doesn't come up unless you talk about their partner. Then you go, "Oh, yeah." For instance, I just worked with Melissa Etheridge's girlfriend, Tammy Lynn Michaels. Oh my God, she's adorable, and she talked about Melissa and the baby. They have a baby together. Then she'd talk about Melissa getting through her illness.

Our stage manager is gay and has a partner, and they have a baby, a beautiful little baby. I'm watching her grow up on tour. She was four months old and now suddenly she's seven.

I was going to ask you how you felt about gay marriage and gay adoption, but you've already told me basically.

Oh, my God, yes. Kids can benefit from two parents. I don't get it. Listen, I have a real baseline on this whole . . .

Aside to Cristi: Do we need to do anything else in Beverly Hills, honey? →

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From Rhoda to Golda

continued from page 28

Cristi: Not that I know of.

To Blase: Just let us look at heterosexuality, OK?

OK.

Here's my baseline. The minute—and I'm talking heterosexual now—there's birth control, even with the Catholics, if it's rhythm or, excuse my crudeness, pulling out, whatever it is, whatever the birth control is—pills, coils, condoms—the minute you do that, it is for fun. It is not for procreation. So what the hell does it matter if it's a man or a woman if they're consenting adults? Now that's terribly basic, and it's maybe simplistic, but that's what I see. And I think, *What the hell business is it of mine of what makes you happy or who you are?* How dare anyone say, "Would you please pervert your life? Would you please be uncomfortable? Would you please rip your guts out and diminish your soul and live falsely for my comfort?" That's why I always hated Don't Ask, Don't Tell. Why should you not tell? Why can't you walk in the streets holding hands? What does it do to me? What is the harm to me that you express who you are?

And the civil rights movement: Black gain is not white loss. Jews gain is not non-

Jewish loss. Haven't we seen Hitler's ovens? And this poor guy tied to a post in Wyoming, and blacks being drug behind trucks. Even in this day and age.

Look at *Brokeback Mountain*. The humanity... I love that movie. And the casting is so wonderful of the girls. They didn't make unattractive, ugly, biting girls... all three of them... even the waitress. She was a full human being and a person saying, "You know, Ennis, you short-change people. I've got a life, and you should at least call or cut me loose or whatever." They were all full human beings.

If [sex] is really for making babies... Fifty percent divorce rate, thank you very much. What sanctity? The very guys in Congress talking about it have been married three times. They're serial marriers. So, anyway, that's my opinion.

Thank you for giving it.

Oh absolutely. Oh, I love Cokie Roberts. On a talk show one day, she said, "We always talk about the gay life, the craziness, the dressing up, the promiscuity, AIDS, the spread of..." And she said, "These people want to get married. They want to live a life with one partner. Get it? Do you get it?" It was so hilarious, I laughed. I said, Good for you, Cokie.

[Laughs]

"We're here, we're queer. Get used to it." My niece is gay, and her partner said, "I got one: 'We're here. We're dykes. Don't hurt us. We'll kill ya.'"

[Both laugh hysterically]

Speaking of... has a woman ever put the make on you?

Years and years ago, a girlfriend who was heterosexual (I think) sat with me and said, "I have to talk to you about something." She said, "I need your advice. I have a friend who loves a girlfriend who's a friend, but she would like to take the step. What do you think?" We'd been friends for three years. And I said, "Well, if the person is willing to lose the friendship, because if you cross that line, maybe the other person couldn't handle it." So we talked in circles, but she didn't make the move, and we remained friends. I don't know if it was her, but I think it was. But you know what? I would say, "Oh, my God, I'm so flattered, but no thank you. But it's very flattering." But, no, I've never had that occur.

Going back in time. Assuming you had to audition for the role of Rhoda [on *The Mary Tyler Moore Show*], what was it like? →

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From Rhoda to Golda

continued from page 30

It was a lovely experience.

Aside to Cristi: Do you want to go for some lunch, honey?

Cristi: Yeah, I was just trying to think of a place.

Valerie: You think of a place.

Cristi: I'll drive, and I'll find a place on Wilshire.

Valerie: Perfect. Perfect.

Cristi yells at dog.

Valerie: It's OK, honey. It's not bothering me or Blase. Is it bothering you?

No, not at all.

To Cristi: Don't worry, honey. Don't worry.

To Blase: My daughter is trying to keep her quiet and drive and do everything.

Oh, that's sweet.

Yes, she is sweet. She's a fabulous girl. And a very talented actress. You'll be interviewing her one day soon.

Oh, neat. I can't wait.

To Cristi: "Oh, neat," Blase says.

To Blase: She will remember you forever.

All right!

Anyway, I got the whole script beforehand, and I could see that it was a beautiful role. My then-husband Dick Schaal worked with me on it. I remember we had a sailboat at the time, out at Marina del Rey. We went on the boat, and he coached me and helped me, and I said, I think I'm going to learn these lines, so I can use some props . . . because she's washing windows. And I said, I'll improvise the window, but I'll have a real cloth in my pocket and maybe a bucket as if there's water in it . . . The first *Mary* episode is I am washing windows.

I remember that.

She says, "Hello, I'm Mary Richards." And I say, "Rhoda Morgenstern. Get out of my apartment."

[Laughs]

Well, that's the scene that we were reading. So I came in with a car coat. Do you remember those?

Uh huh.

With the toggle bolts that are kind of bulky-looking outdoor jackets, with the rag in my pocket, which I took out, and I dipped it in, pretending there was water in the bucket, and kinda wrung it out as I'm talking to her. I did a whole number. And they were just thrilled. They said, "Oh, she's really funny." And they called me back and said, "We're going to have you back to see you with Mary." I was a New York actress, so I was used to

Phyllis says, "I know you're going to marry Ben, and I'll just have to get used to it. Why wouldn't you marry him. He's attractive. He's intelligent. He's educated." And I say, "He's gay!"

being called back four, five, six times for a commercial that I didn't get. And I thought, "I'll never get it. We both are brunettes. We both have small noses. They won't cast that way. They'll cast somebody very different looking or chubby and fat, maybe really short, blond, red-headed."

Every girl in town was going up for that role because people had heard about it. So then they called me. I read with [Mary Tyler Moore] just sitting on the couch. This time, I didn't bring props. We read other scenes. They said, "Thank you very much." I left. I



Valerie Harper won three consecutive Emmys (1971, '72, '73) for her role as Rhoda Morgenstern on *The Mary Tyler Moore Show* and picked up another one in '75 for her role in its spin-off *Rhoda*.

lived about 15 minutes from the studio where I auditioned right down in West Hollywood. We called it the "Swish Alps" or "Boys Town" in those days. Now it's West Hollywood. Anyway, so there we are, and I pulled into the driveway and my then-husband Dick Schaal said, "You got it, you got it!" I said, "Get in the house. Don't tease me that way. This is Hollywood. There's got to be a screen test." He said, "They just called. You have the role." I thought to myself, *This is the easiest part I have ever gotten, and I think it's going to mean the most to me.*

I'll always remember *The Mary Tyler Moore Show* for being one of the first shows to portray a positive gay character.

Oh yes, Ben, Phyllis's brother.

And Rhoda dated him.

I did, and you know what? It's an interesting thing. Jay Sandrich was the director, and he said "Valerie, when you say that he's gay, should you lower your voice or be gentle with Cloris [Leachman, who played Phyllis] because you're breaking the news?" And I said, "No, Rhoda's not gonna be gentle with Phyllis. She's so stupid that she doesn't know her brother is gay. What kind of schmuck is she? After living with him and . . . or if she's hypocritical or whatever." My whole thing was to punch holes in her balloon of pomposity, to cut her down to size with her stupidity. Cloris's line was "I know you're going to marry Ben, and I'll just have to get used to it." She's drunk and she says, "Why wouldn't you marry him. He's attractive. He's intelligent. He's educated." And I say, "He's gay!" And I said, right like that, because he's not available, as though he were married or he's a priest or a monk—something that is no judgment. And the audience screamed.

We didn't think that would get a laugh. The line that we thought would get the laugh was the next line, "Oh, Rhoda, I'm so relieved," which was a very hip joke—better her brother gay than marrying dumb, awful Rhoda. That was the joke, and it got a laugh, too. But the shocker of it was with "He's gay!" the audience laughed for a full minute. It was a recognition laugh. It was the longest laugh in the history of . . . maybe until Chuckles the Clown. But until that point it was the longest sustained laugh on *The Mary Tyler Moore Show* ever.

It was great.

And Bob Moore was brilliant in the role. It was a great show. It was so perfectly →

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From Rhoda to Golda

continued from previous page

written, Blase. But you see the integrity in that? "Oh, Rhoda, I'm so relieved." In 1973, to say that. "I'm so happy my brother is..." With no judgment, just happy that he's gay rather than marrying Rhoda. And [director] Jim Brooks would allow no gay bashing. Ever!

He seems to have always been gay-friendly. He really has. And wonderful with women.

You know what, he had a sister he adored, an older sister who he loved dearly, and I think that's part of his sensibility.

I haven't seen *Golda's Balcony*, but I'm looking forward to it.

It's quite a wonderful play. William Gibson wrote it, and he wrote the wonderful *The Miracle Worker* and *Two for the Seesaw*. He's 91 years old, and he wrote *Golda* some years ago, with Anne Bancroft and a whole cast and it didn't work. It was a big bomb. So now he's

gone back to the drawing board. He's just a superb writer, and Golda Meir is one of the talented figures of the 20th century, male or female. I love her. I loved her in the 1960s. I was living in New York. She was constantly there at the UN speaking, on television, doing press conferences, fighting for Israel, fighting for justice. Many issues. She was just great.

I cannot wait to see it.

Well, I hope it's not a disappointment. It's a very interesting play, and it's all in one piece. It's 90 minutes, just like a movie, straight through with no intermission, because there's so much warfare and there's a lot of production. There's flashing lights and war noises and planes flying. There's live action on the screens behind me. There are three big screens showing what appears to be stone ruins in Jerusalem. Big massive things. Even though it's one character, it's not a lady in a walker talking about her life. I step off the stage in a new lighting area and we relive the memories. Some of them are told directly to the audience, but many of them are relived as scenes with people—a conversation back and forth between characters.

I'm looking forward to your Houston visit. Have you ever been to Houston? I did a play years ago with Anthony Zerbe called *Dear Liar*, and we played a beautiful theater in Houston. And I eat at Houston's all the time.

[Both laugh]

It's a great restaurant. Wonderful baked potatoes, which I shouldn't be eating. [Laughs] Have we finished? Do you have everything that you need?

Yes. I want to thank you for staying on the phone this long. Oh, of course! It's my pleasure.

And tell your daughter I hope she makes it really soon.

To Cristi: "I hope you make it really soon."

To Blase: She's so pretty. She's beautiful. Take care, honey.

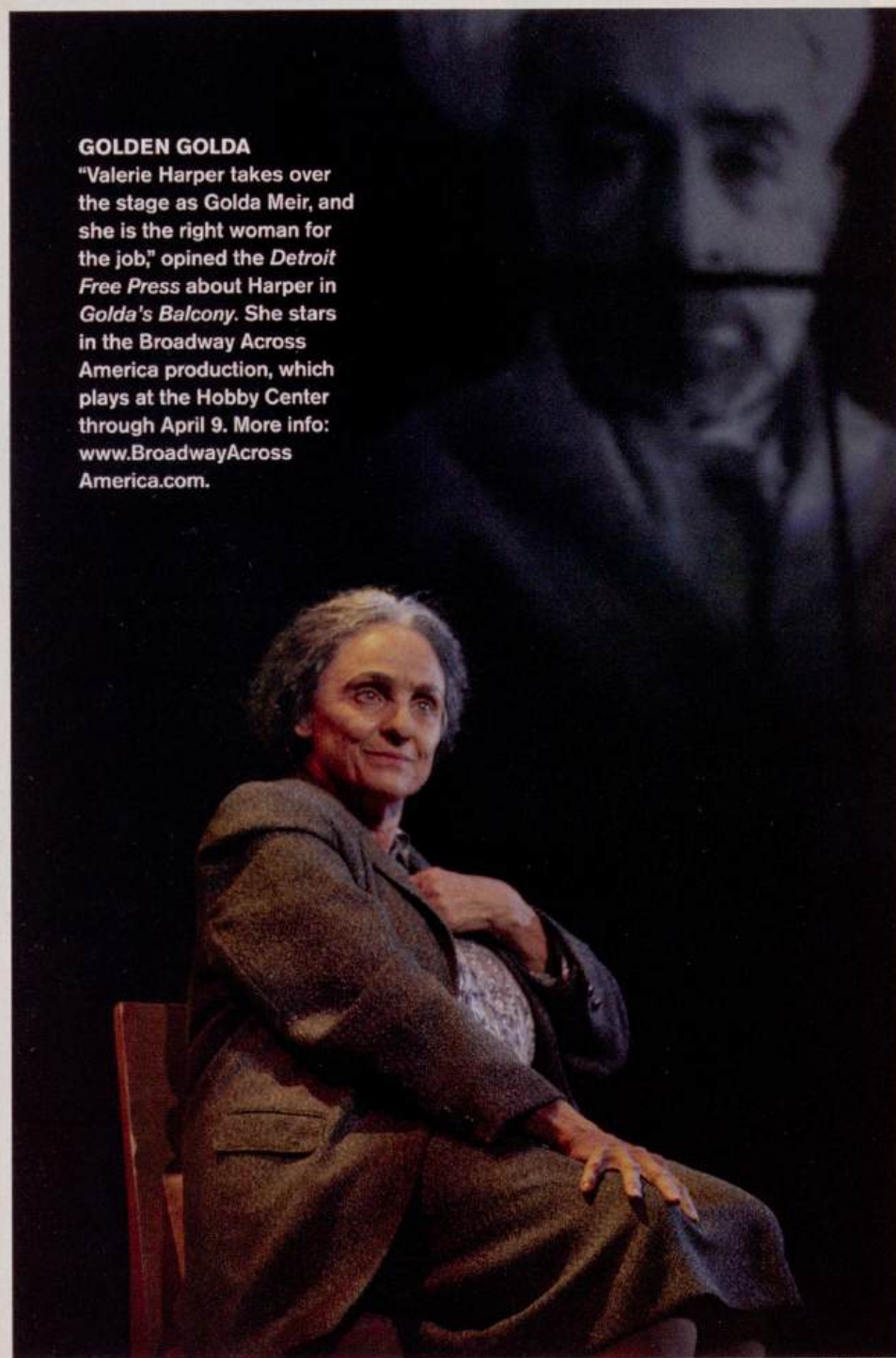
Thank you. Bye bye.

Read more about Valerie Harper at www.outsmartmagazine.com.

Blase DiStefano interviewed John Waters for OutSmart's February issue.

GOLDEN GOLDA

"Valerie Harper takes over the stage as Golda Meir, and she is the right woman for the job," opined the *Detroit Free Press* about Harper in *Golda's Balcony*. She stars in the Broadway Across America production, which plays at the Hobby Center through April 9. More info: www.BroadwayAcrossAmerica.com.



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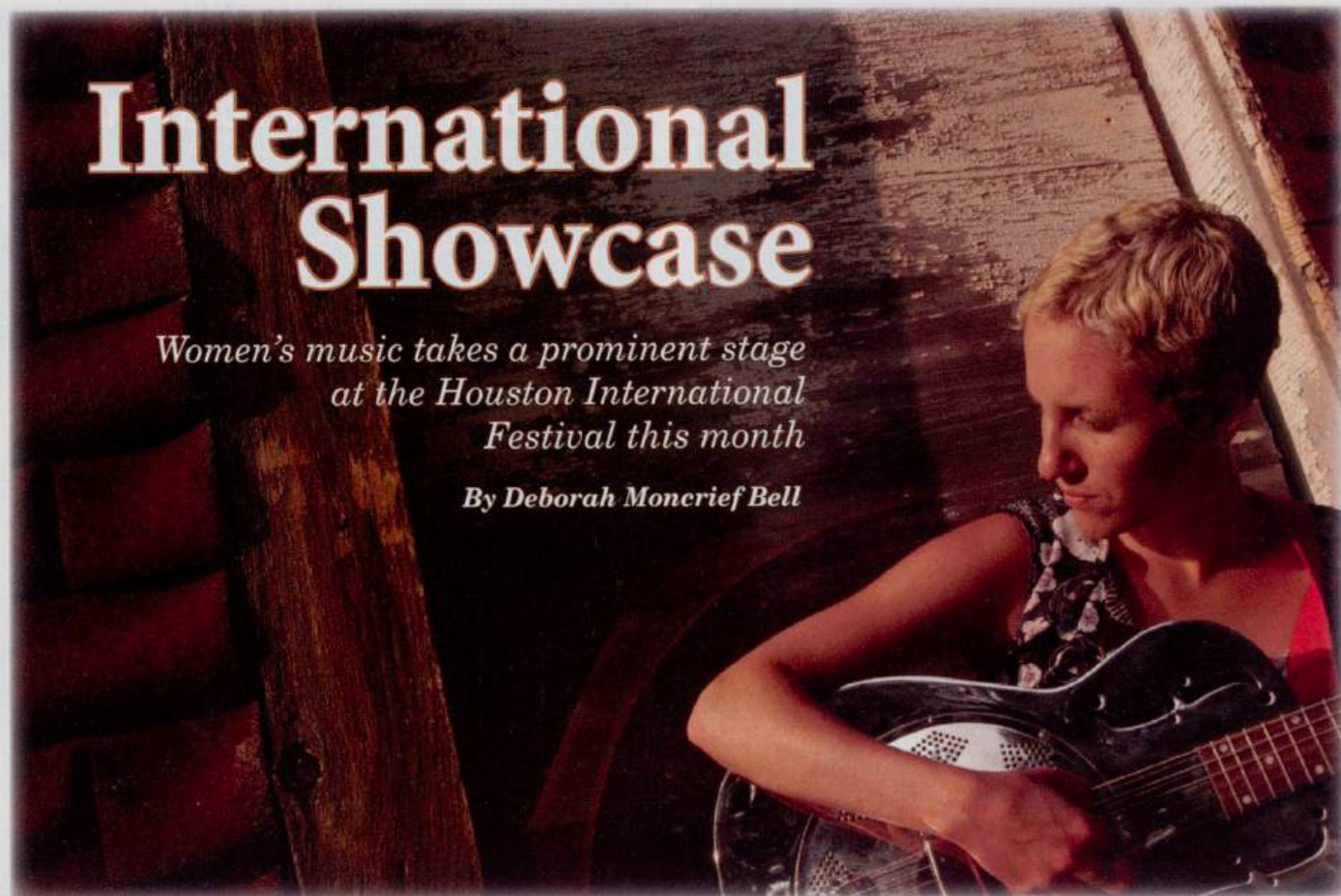
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International Showcase

Women's music takes a prominent stage at the Houston International Festival this month

By Deborah Moncrief Bell



EMILY BARKER/COURTESY NATALIA ZUCKERMAN

Natalia with a Z: The Peace from the Porch Stage at the Houston International Festival features women's-music favorites including Natalia Zuckerman.

Back in the day—meaning, in this case, the '70s and '80s—there was something called Women's Music. The term defies definition as a genre because it encompasses such a mix of types of music and performers. Ranging from “girl with guitar” to choruses, many of the women making the music were out lesbians.

Margie Adam, considered one of “the big four” in women's music, along with Holly Near, Cris Williamson, and Meg Christian, defined women's music this way in a 2001 interview with JD Doyle on Queer Music Heritage, which airs as part of the Queer Voices program on KPFT:

“There is this movement called women's music, which kind of exists in a time period, kind of erupted on the scene in the early '70s. This had to do with a bunch of us who looked around and did not see ourselves in the music industry, did not see women engineers, did not see women in distribution, did not see women in production, did not see women using drumsticks and playing the bass, did not see women anywhere in the music industry except fronting bands as singers. What we really did in the '70s was to create a total alternative universe where we could maintain control over the means of distribution, production and also control over the music itself. So women's music was originally an impulse of many radical feminists to make music in our own image, rather than through the male gaze. This was extremely revolutionary.”

The label can be limiting, which is unfortunate, because it means these gifted artists don't always reach a large audience. Most of them are content to be able to play their music and earn a living doing so. Many of the pioneers are still playing coffeehouses, bars, festivals, and whatever gig they can and are part of the growing house-concert phenomenon. Women's music is alive and well, evolving and growing, even though most up-and-coming artists would be labeled as alternative or independent. A line-up of some of the leading women's music artists of today are featured this month during the April 21–30 Houston International Festival.



PHOTOS THIS PAGE COURTESY CHRISTY CLAXTON

From the Porch

For the second year, festival organizers have invited lesbian singer/songwriter and concert presenter Christy Claxton to produce the Peace from the Porch Stage—a version of the award-winning concert series, Bear Creek Concerts, that Claxton hosts at her 28-acre homestead in La Grange, Texas. In 2004, she produced a CD compilation of independent musicians who had performed at Bear Creek entitled *Peace from the Porch, Vol. 1*. Proceeds from CD sales benefited the American Cancer Society. International Festival executive director Jim Austin was so impressed with the CD and the concert series that he invited Claxton and former partner, Lane Gosnay, to present a stage at the International Festival in 2005.

The Peace from the Porch Stage returns this year in conjunction with the release of *Peace from the Porch, Vol. 2*. Sales from this second CD benefit agencies that support victims of domestic violence. Many of the featured artists are gay, lesbian, or bisexual. They include Erika Luckett, Natalia Zuckerman, Martine Locke, Patrice Pike, Julie Loyd, Sharon Bousquet, and Ginger Leigh. Levi Kreis and Tret Fure are also featured on the album but will not perform at the festival.

“I think there is a real significance that GLBT artists would so willingly participate in this project when its focus is to raise money for something so dark and nasty as domestic violence,” Claxton says. “This is not about polite table talk. It is not necessarily triumphant. Even those who overcome carry that trauma and sad-



Porch swing: Christy Claxton, rocking at her home outside LaGrange (top), produces the Peace from the Porch Stage at the International Festival. In November, Claxton (above, far r) posed with her fellow musicians at the first rehearsal of the Bear Creek Ensemble, which also consists of (l-r) Tanya Richardson, Erika Luckett, Samantha Banks, Patrice Pike, and (seated in front) Ruthie Foster. Claxton (l) in the Bear Creek offices in LaGrange.

ness for the rest of their lives. As GLBT artists, we maybe understand that pain a little more deeply than the straight family next door. I am extremely proud of this project, the caliber of artists involved, and that some of the very best in American independent music are GLBT. This will put us in the greater public eye in the very most positive light possible, as caring, loving, realistic, community-minded citizens.”

The Peace from the Porch stage (presented on April 23–23 and on April 29–30 on the grounds of the Houston Heritage Society in Sam Houston Park) is an opportunity for the GLBT community and supporters to gather and demonstrate a presence while celebrating our contribution to the arts, Claxton says.

“I want the world to see us for who we really are—powerful, caring, talented, loving people who have the strength and resolve to not only make our GLBT world a better place but the entire world better for all. It's peace on the home front.” →



International voice: Born in Mexico, the multilingual Erika Luckett has also lived and sung in Venezuela, Brazil, and France.

MORE MUSIC

OutSmart contributor Deborah Moncrief Bell is also one of the producers of the Diva House Concerts. Christy Claxton performed the first show in the series in January. On April 28, Australian-born singer/songwriter Martine Locke, whose latest CD is *On the Verge* (Passionfruit Produce), comes to Houston for second Diva House concert. Wrote one critic in *Revolver* magazine of this performer: "Martine Locke is a fine example of everything I admire about the chick singer phenomenon. She's got a beautiful voice, plays guitar like a monster, and is one of the most motivated and enthusiastic people this reporter has come across in a long time." Concert details: thedivadeb@yahoo.



From Down Under: Born in Australia, now based in San Francisco, Martine Locke performs in Houston on April 28.

INTERNATIONAL IRONY

The same Houston International Festival that features a prominent group of queer- and queer-friendly musicians on the Peace from the Porch stage salutes Jamaica, a nation with a recent history of violence against GLBT people, including the murders of prominent HIV/AIDS activist Steve Harvey in 2005 and gay activist Brian Williamson in 2004. Even J-FLAG (logo, above), the sole GLBT organization in the country, posts this notice on its website: "Due to the potential for violent retribution, we cannot publish the exact location of our office." Jamaican music stars Beenie Man Buju Banton have prompted protests in the United States and Europe for lyrics that advocate homophobic violence.

Again this year the local Parents, Friends and Family of Lesbians and Gays chapter will staff a booth (sponsored by *OutSmart*) at the festival, sharing its message of tolerance and compassion.

Now Performing

Two of the featured Peace from the Porch artists this year bring with them the tradition of what could be called women's music as well as connections fitting the festival's international theme. Both are acclaimed as gifted musicians with their chosen instruments yet have different styles.

Natalia Zuckerman, classically trained in violin, is from an accomplished musical family. The daughter of violinist/conductor Pinchas Zukerman and flutist/writer Eugenia Zukerman, Natalia grew up in Manhattan immersed in classical music. Performing live—and experiencing what she calls the life of a "wandering gypsy"—seems to be a family tradition: Her sister Arianna is an opera singer, and her paternal grandfather played clarinet in klezmer bands in Poland and Israel. However, Zuckerman breaks with that tradition to a degree.

"My parents took me to the Aspen Music Festival when I was very young. One day I saw the classical violinist Nigel Kennedy playing fiddle in a bluegrass band, and heard banjos for the first time..." Zuckerman laughs as she thinks back on that "aha" moment. Once her eyes opened to the folk scene, everything began to change. She turned her attention to the guitar and now performs folk with a mix of blues and jazz.

Erika Luckett is another not-to-be missed Peace from the Porch performer. Whether she is singing in English, Spanish, French, or Portuguese, Luckett and her music remind us that beauty and a luminous heart transcend any boundary.

Crossing boundaries comes easily to Luckett. She was born in Mexico and raised in Venezuela and Brazil. As a teenager, she made her way to France, playing in the subways where her own concoction of folk/Latin/jazz/pop echoed in the underground.

With a degree in film scoring, Luckett has written for film, multimedia, and theater. She recently stepped on the other side of the camera, performing in the 2005 movie *The Californians*.

For the complete schedule of Peace from the Porch performers, which also includes Texas favorite Shake Russell, check the Houston International Festival website: www.ifest.org.

Deborah Moncrief Bell, who profiled City Council candidate Sue Lovell, for our October issue, is a co-host/producer of *Queer Voices*, the weekly KPFT program.

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A Woman of Progress



Felicia Bradford, president and CEO of the new Progressive Women's Network, Inc. presides over two major events this month. On April 15, her women-empowerment organization presents a networking reception and luncheon, It's a Woman's World: Excellent in the 3rd Millennium, at the Westchase Hilton. Andrea Bouchee Young, Houston Comets president and CEO, is keynote speaker. Some proceeds from the event benefit A Caring

Closet, which provides donated clothing to women in need. Then on April 29, the network hosts 18 Holes For Bo, a charity golf tournament and luau at Cypresswood Golf Club. The beneficiary is Bo's Place, which offers programs that assist children affected by the death of a parent or sibling. Highlights include a martini bar on the 10th hole and a hole-in-one grand prize, a 2006 Honda Pilot from Russell & Smith Auto Group. To enter: www.houstonpwn.org.

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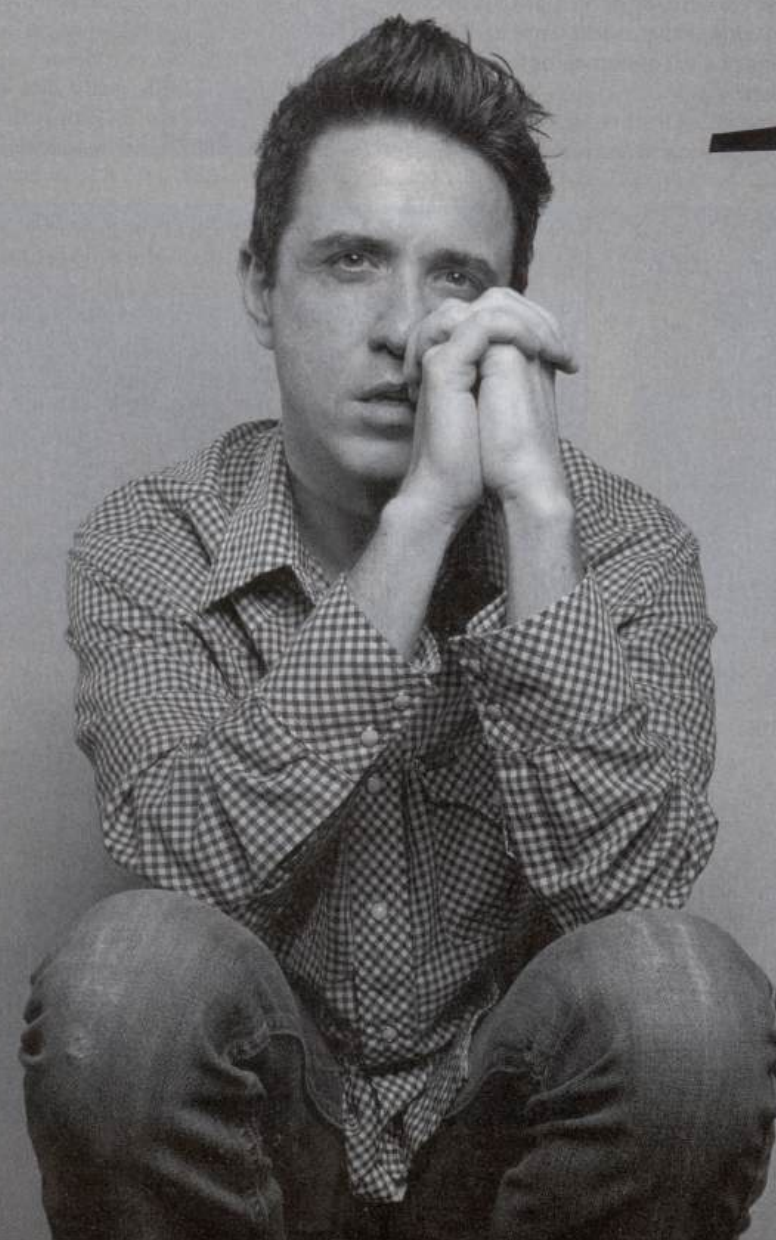
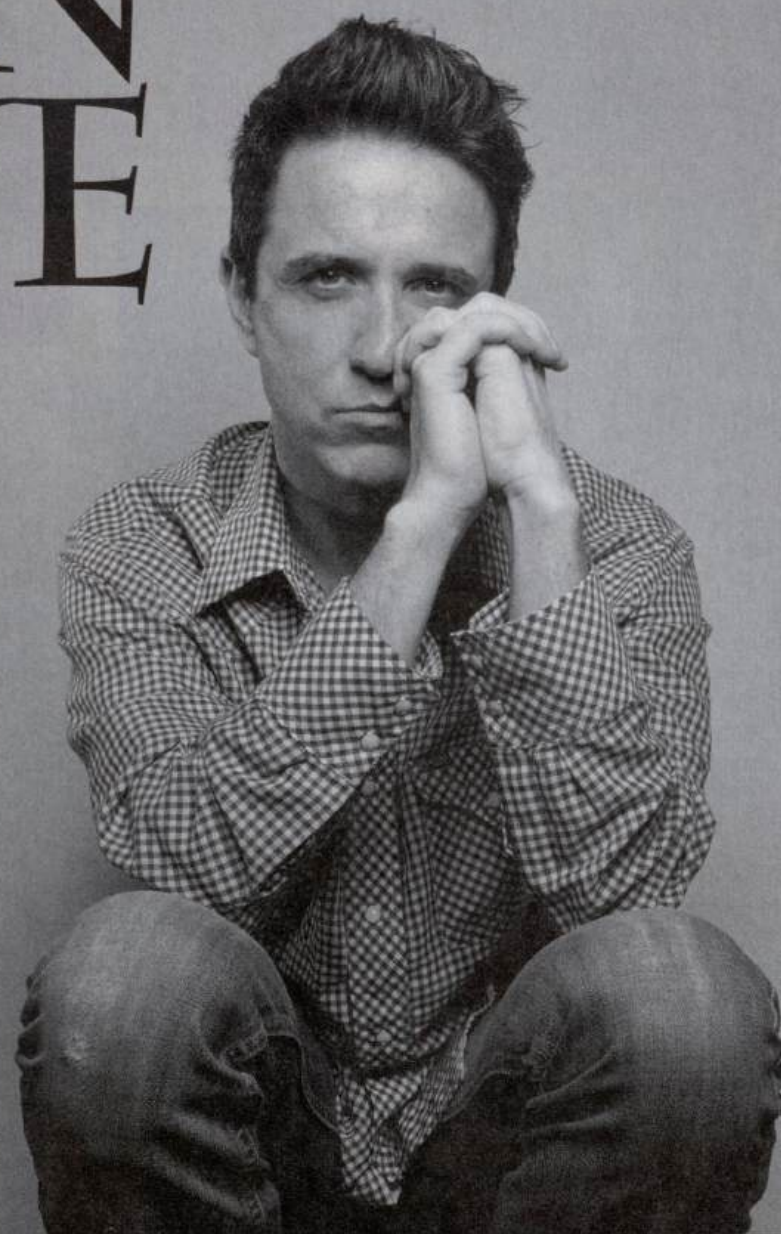
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A NEW TAKE ON LOVE

Actor/director
Craig Chester
brings a fresh, gay
perspective to the
Hollywood romantic
comedy with his
just-released movie
Adam & Steve

by Gregg Shapiro

Photos courtesy of David Jensen



It might seem to some that queer cinema is in the midst of a kind of renaissance, but out actor Craig Chester has been making gay films for nearly 15 years. In the early 1990s, Chester could be seen in such groundbreaking movies as *Swoon*, *Grief*, *Frisk*, and even *Kiss Me, Guido*, to name a few. However, just in time for LGBT film's second wind, Chester stars in the relentlessly fun and endearing new gay romantic comedy, *Adam & Steve*, which he also wrote and directed.

With a stellar cast that includes Malcolm Gets as Adam's love interest Steve, Parker Posey as Adam's best friend Rhonda, Chris Kattan as Steve's roommate Michael, as well as Sally Kirkland, Julie Hagerty, Paul Sand, and Melinda Dillon, *Adam & Steve* is as star-studded as it is hilarious (see review, page 86). If Woody Allen was gay, this is the kind of queer comedy he would make.

Gregg Shapiro: *Adam & Steve* opens in 1987 with Animation's "Obsession" playing in the background and the club populated with Dazzle Dancers and the Goths. Would you agree that the '80s rival the '70s as a source of comic material?

Craig Chester: That's before everything became referential. Once the '90s came along, we were just co-opting everything from the past. Now there's nothing to co-opt. What would 1995 look like? One version of the script took place in 1987, but it was a retro night for 1975. Now we have Britney Spears, but that's really just Tiffany and Debbie Gibson all over again. There's this one shot in the movie, when Adam and Steve are 21 in 1987, where they are looking at the downtown skyline and there's the World Trade Centers. What's →

A New Take on Love

continued from previous page

changed about nostalgia is that after 9/11, it became a whole other thing. Before 9/11, AIDS was the defining thing in the '80s. Now, the World Trade Centers have become this symbol for lost innocence. I look back at the '80s now, when I was 21, in New York, as this innocent time, before the world changed, before terrorism, when AIDS was just starting—this last minute of innocence.

The shots on the bridge, overlooking the skyline, bracket the movie. As someone who has lived in New York for 20 years, was this movie your love letter to New York?

Very much so. I think New York is inherently romantic. Some people, like Nora Ephron, have used that to great effect. But I think that it is such a great backdrop for stories. There are so many stories going on in that city at any given time.

I'm glad that you mentioned the romantic aspect of the city. The movie has the *Lady & The Tramp* spaghetti scene homage, and there is also humor in the Woody Allen-meets-Monty Python quality of the public display of affection scenes.

For me, the movie is in many ways a movie about movies, about Hollywood movies. We

are sort of co-opting this romantic comedy formula—boy meets boy, boy loses boy, boy gets boy back. In that sense it's very populist and traditional, and not very indie. At the same time it's a film about Hollywood. I think that in the independent film movement, comedies are not given their due in a way, which I think is sort of hypocritical. John Waters and Woody Allen were independent filmmakers in the '70s who had a huge part in the independent film movement. And yet John Cassavettes gets all the praise. But John Waters was doing very provocative and groundbreaking films that were completely comedy and actually very queer. Somehow or another, humor has been lost in this queer identity.

This movie does what so few comedies do, and that is that it made me laugh out loud. I'm always disappointed when I watch a comedy and it doesn't make me laugh. There's nothing worse.

For example, the Goth punk names, Maura Bid and Rex Havoc, which are such small things, completely cracked me up. Did you go through a lot of names before deciding on those?

No. I just thought them up. She's morbidly obese, so Maura Bid. And I had an ex-boy-

friend who was in a Goth band and he used Rex Havoc.

Rhonda's character is a formerly fat person who continues to make jokes about being fat in her stand-up comedy act. There's the funny line about Oprah.

The Oprah line is one of the biggest laughs in the movie. The film is about being gay, but it's also about being in a relationship, gay or straight. And Parker and Chris sort of serve that purpose as well. It's really challenging to write a romantic comedy in a day and age of Oprah where we have self-help and supposedly have all the answers about why relationships work or why they don't work. It takes away the mystery and magic in a way. There was a time I was really into her [Oprah]. The thing that bothers me is it is tied up in this notion of Christianity: There is a right and a wrong, and there is this way to be that is healthy, which is just another way of saying godly, which I think excludes a huge chunk of her audience. For years I had watched her and imagined myself as a straight woman in a marriage, and I'm not. I'm a gay guy, and I date guys, and some of it applies, but a lot of it doesn't apply.

The movie really deals with these ideas of the frustration of living in a society where every image is heterosexual, every →

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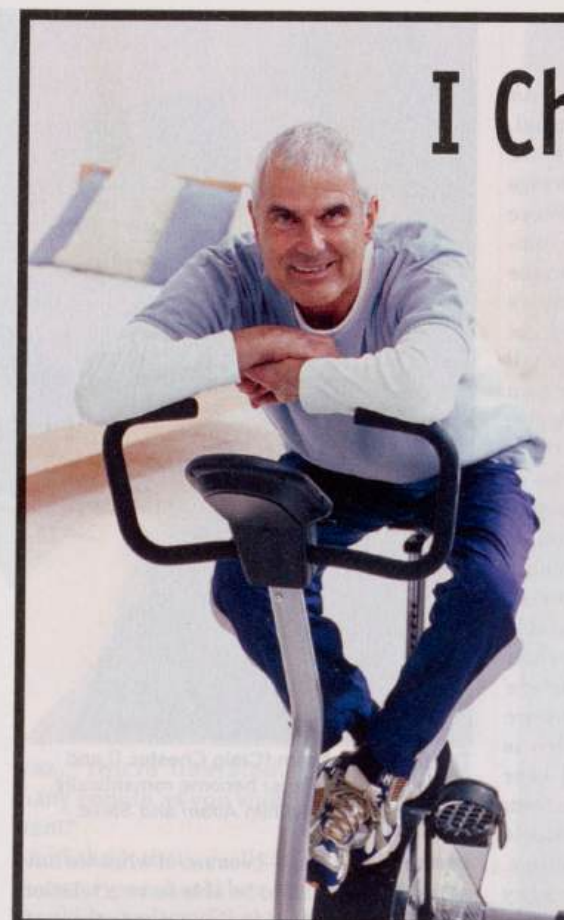
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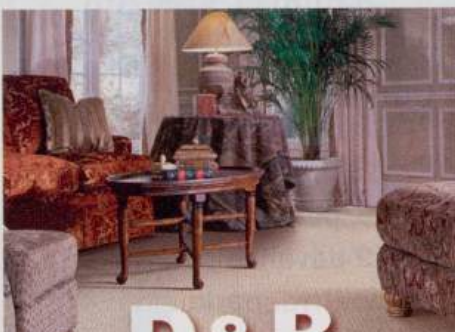


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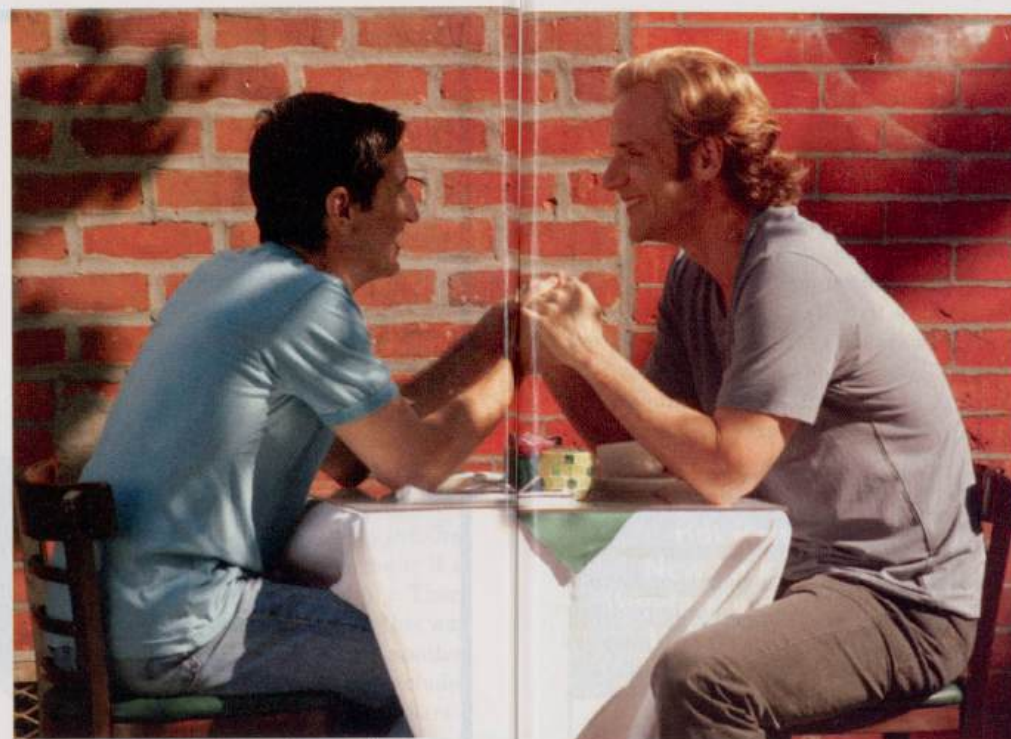
A New Take on Love

continued from page 44

relationship book is heterosexual, *Oprah* is heterosexual, self-help is heterosexual, and movies and TV and commercials are heterosexual. The movie repeatedly brings this up. In this one part, I'm talking to Steve [Malcolm Gets], and I watch romantic comedies and I'm Julia Roberts and then I'm the guy. The movie really comments on what it's like to be in love in a society that does not necessarily provide images of [homosexual] relationships. We're trying to see our own dilemma in a filter of heterosexual images, and some things are universal. Then there are things that don't apply, because we're not heterosexual. The movie stakes claim to that. I'm providing images of a gay couple and what it's like to be in a relationship when you're gay. In the classic Jewish romantic comedy you have the obstacle between the two characters, which are their own neuroses. In this film the characters' neuroses are obstacles as well. But we have this extra, added obstacle, which is the outside world—people throwing beer bottles at them, and yelling at them from across the street. There is also the obstacle of promiscuity and available sex and drugs. There are more obstacles in a way for a gay couple than a straight couple.

Add the fact that one of them is Jewish and the other isn't. Everything you add to it is just compounding this relationship.

For a lesbian or gay couple to get together and make a relationship work is amazing considering the obstacles in this world. I think that's why the gay marriage issue is so



The first step: Adam (Craig Chester, l) and Steve (Malcolm Gets) become romantically involved in the new film *Adam and Steve*.

profound in a way—because of what we have to go through just to be able have a relationship. I think that if you're a romantic at all, and you're a gay guy... A lot of my friends are romantics, but they're embarrassed about it. I think it's all tied into this notion of misogyny in a way, because it's feminine to be in love, it's feminine to be romantic.

It goes against the concept of gay liberation, really. One of gay liberation's concepts



Cowboys make better lovers: Adam (Craig Chester, r) and Steve (Malcolm Gets, l) don cowboy drag for the new romantic comedy *Adam and Steve*.

was, "You're liberated. You can do as many people as you want, as much as you want."

And I think that's really valid. I don't think that everyone should be a romantic. Everyone should be welcome. I think that the issues that affected the gay community in the '70s don't apply now. We have to keep evolving. AIDS changed everything. I didn't really want my ego frozen in 1994, so it's been important for me as an artist to do work that's reflective of the time that we live in, and I think *Adam & Steve* is very much about now.

The character of Adam is also written very well. In the scene at the Big Apple Rodeo where he says, "I can barely one-step," then "Give me a bottle dance, and I'm fine." Jewish people get that. [Laughs]

The scene at the rodeo is hysterically funny—the dance off. Was it a way to take advantage of Malcolm's theatrical background?

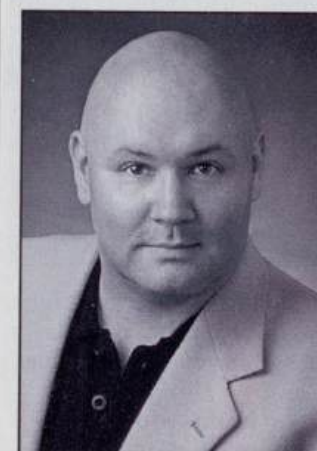
No, that was in there before Malcolm came on. I really like high drama, big emotions. The movie is sort of a gay Jewish guy's fantasy, in a way, because you have people appearing in a cloud of smoke at a bar, and musical numbers. It is fantastic reality. The big-battle dance happens at the climax of the film, and when I was writing it, I [wondered] if I could have this scene where this little pipsqueak gay guy kicks the ass of the big porn star/hot guy. [Laughs] Adam is sort of the "gay everyman." He's not a porn star; that's not his currency. This fits into the Hollywood notion of the Ben Stiller character: the little guy who triumphs over the jock. I applied this →



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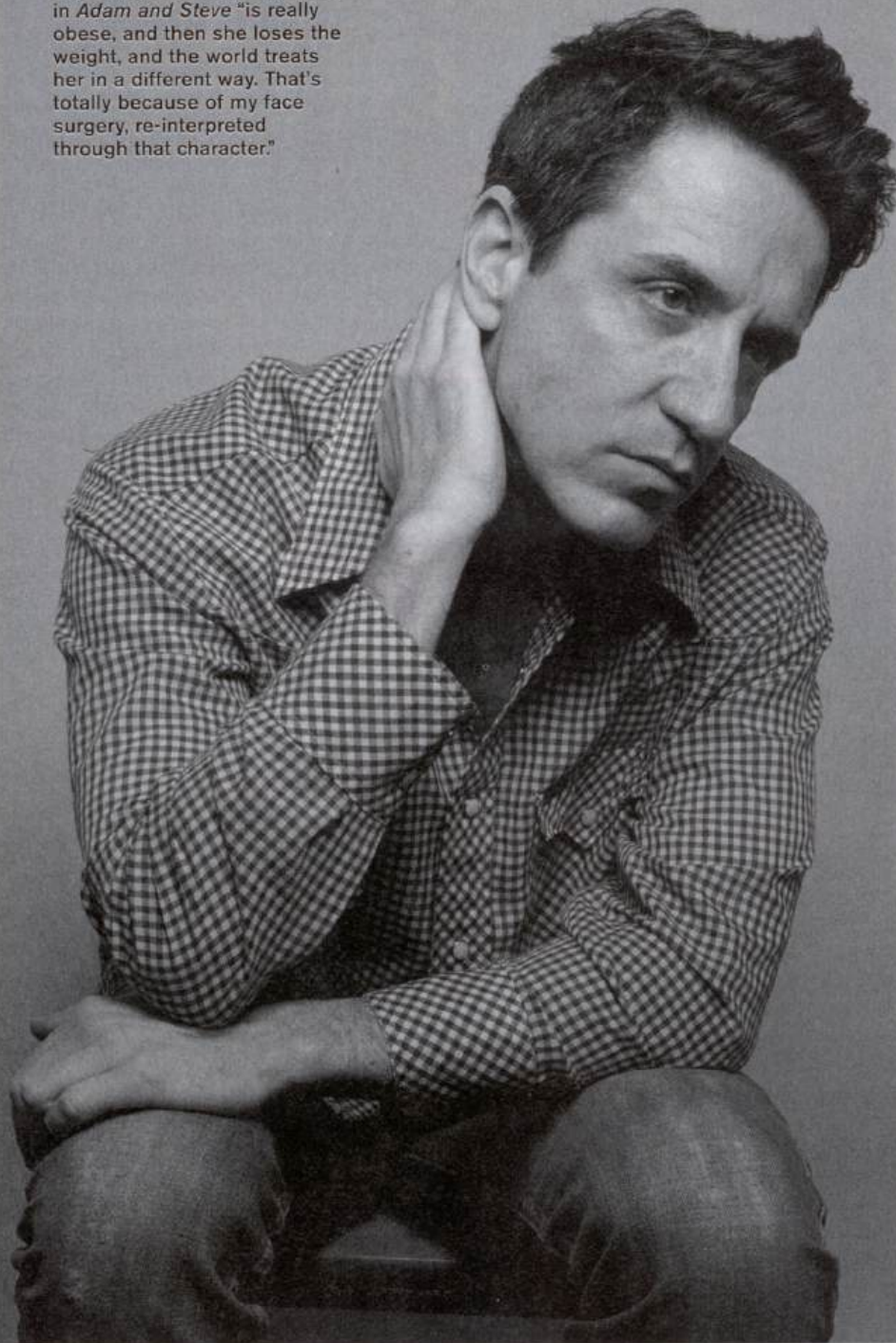
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A New Take on Love

continued from previous page

"I had my face surgery, and I went from looking not so great to looking OK," Craig Chester says. Parker Posey's character in *Adam and Steve* "is really obese, and then she loses the weight, and the world treats her in a different way. That's totally because of my face surgery, re-interpreted through that character."



standard formula to gay guys. I also had this fantasy of being in a musical number.

I read your book [*Why the Long Face: The Adventures of a Truly Independent Actor*] and know you were raised in a fundamen-

talist Christian family. I thought it was kind of funny that you would cast yourself as a Jewish character. Can you say something about that?

I've lived in New York for 20 years, so I feel like an honorary Jew. [Laughs] Every

role I've played has been Jewish. I'm working out some kind of Jewish karma in this life. I've played a lot of Jewish characters. I relate to Jewish people. I relate most to the Jewish mentality. I think it is because I've sort of grown up in New York. I don't relate to the born-again thing. I mean, I do. Steve is from Texas, and Steve is me in many ways. In a way, all the characters are me. Even Rhonda is me. I had my face surgery, and I went from looking not so great to looking OK. Parker's character is really obese, and then she loses the weight, and the world treats her in a different way. That's totally because of my face surgery, re-interpreted through that character. In a heterosexual movie, when you have a man and a woman, you have inherent differences. But when you have two guys, to make the formula work, you have to make them totally opposites.

Would you say that the central romance of the story is something that is based on a cumulative experience, or is it more of a romantic fantasy of what you would like to have?

It's based on experience. A lot of it is stolen from my life—from meeting boyfriends' parents and their meeting mine. A lot of it comes from my life experience, and in that sense it's sort of more authentic in that way, because I'm gay, and I'm making a movie about being gay. But the part of it where it becomes fantasy is when Steve comes back. [Laughs] When Steve comes and sings a song to Adam from *The Sound of Music*, it's this egregious, corny, over-the-top, romantic thing. That's something that's never really happened to me in real life. But I would like to believe in that. [Laughs]

As much as I laughed, I also cried. The wedding just got to me.

It's so weird, because I was on the fence about the wedding. I don't know how I feel about the whole gay marriage thing—personally, if I would get married—but I think people should have the right to do that. I wrestled with it. But then I thought of the idea that "it takes a village to help a relationship work" is so cool, and it's been that way for millions of years. I [made it so] the relationship will get the help from the support system of friends and family.

Gregg Shapiro also wrote "GrooveOut" on page 92 of this issue.

ON THE WEB: Read more of this interview at www.outsmartmagazine.com.

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SAUCE:

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2 onions, sliced
8 Roma tomatoes, sliced in half
4 chipotle chiles
3-4 tablespoons brown sugar

Sauté garlic and onions over medium-high heat until soft.
Add tomatoes. Allow liquid to reduce slightly and thicken.
Pour liquid into bowl of food processor and add tamarind,
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Serves 2

Daily Review Café, 3412 West Lamar,
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continued on page 53

FOOD CALENDAR

• Popular Food Network star Sara Moulton is the celebrity host at the Grand Food & Wine Affair, presented by Central Market on April 26-27 at the Marriott Sugar Land Town Square. Moulton will sign copies of her latest book, *Sara's Secrets for Weeknight Meals*, on April 28. Other highlights include appearances by prominent regional chefs, the Sienna Sip & Stroll featuring 50 wineries, and a bistro brunch. Details: www.thegrandwineandfoodaffair.com



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2 cups orange juice
3/4 cup lemon juice
12 garlic cloves, crushed
4 shallots, chopped
6 dry chipotles, crushed
Salt and pepper to taste
1 cup chicken stock
1 tablespoon olive oil

2 pork tenderloins, cut in half
Prepared black beans
2 tablespoons chopped cilantro

MARINADE: Combine orange juice, lemon juice, garlic,
shallots, chipotles, salt, and pepper in a shallow bowl.
Mix well. Add pork and marinate for 20 minutes, turning
once. Remove pork and reserve marinade for sauce.
Refrigerate both until using.

SAUCE: Combine reserved marinade with chicken
stock in saucepan on medium-high heat. Reduce
marinade until flavors of citrus, garlic, and spice
from the chile balance to taste. When ready,
strain, discard solids, and refrigerate sauce.

PORK: Preheat oven to 400 degrees. Heat oil in an
oven-proof sauté pan and quickly brown pork on all sides.
Place sauté pan in oven and roast the pork, turning once
to keep it from over browning. Cook pork for 12 to 15
minutes to medium (135 degrees) or preferred doneness.
Do not overcook, or pork will be dry. When pork is done,
remove it from pan, keep it warm, and let it rest.

Add reserved sauce to the hot sauté pan and deglaze
over medium heat. Warm the sauce.

Slice pork and serve on black beans. Pour a generous
amount of sauce over the pork. Garnish with cilantro.

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Hallelujah! On Easter Sunday, the Lady Bunny brings her larger-than-life persona and sky-high wig to Houston when she performs DJ duty at the Bunnies on the Bayou party. But worshipers can expect much more than just a tune-spinner. If you don't know the legendary Madame Bunny, then where have you been? Among her many queer-chievements, she is founder of Wigstock, the Labor Day drag festival in New York. Armed with a wicked wit to go with her extravagant lashes, the Lady Bunny is also one of the sharpest comics in show biz. Along with her April 16 Bunnies gig, she will perform a show at Guava Lamp while in town. Her appearances here are rare. Bow down before her. —Tim Brookover



She's a Lady ... an X-rated Lady

Rated X (for Xtra Retarded!) is packed with nearly a full hour of drag sensation Lady Bunny's (*Wigstock: The Movie*) unique brand of wickedly irreverent comedy, featuring raunchy pop parodies like "Don't Let Your Son Go Down on Me," "All That Jizz," and "It Takes Two (to Make My Hole Feel Tight)." Bunny sends up celebrities like Whitney Houston, Madonna, Clay Aiken, and more in songs and joke routines. *Rated X (for Xtra Retarded!)* is a must-have item for Bunny addicts, drag lovers, or just fans of good old raunchy comedy in general. See the trailer at www.ladybunny.net.



A Certain Someone

Two years ago, we introduced *OutSmart* readers to the talented team that writes under the *nom de plume* Timothy James Beck. As we reported then, two of those four, Timothy James Lambert and Becky Cochrane, live in Montrose ["Author! Author?," February 2003]. At the same, they had just published their second novel, *He's the One* (Kensington). This month, TJB—to use the authors' own shorthand—releases a new book, *Someone Like You*, set in the "Mall of the Universe." The cast of characters includes Vienna, "a beautiful sister who is determined never to be dependent on any man ever again"; Davii, "a hairdresser at CosmicTology, 'fast with a wickedly funny quip as well as his shears'; and Derek, a kept man."

The Houston-centric Timothy James Beck writing team releases a new novel this month. Here, an excerpt from *Someone Like You*



SIGN UP

Becky Cochrane and Timothy James Lambert, two of the quartet that make up Timothy James Beck, will sign copies of *Someone Like You* at Borders River Oaks on April 29, 7:30 p.m. They will be joined by New Orleans writer Greg Herren, who will sign copies of his new book, *Mardi Gras Mambo*.

I used to get threatened all the time in high school," Davii said. "This one guy picked on me every day. I even had a girlfriend at the time, and he'd still call me a fag and throw things at me."

"What did you do?" Derek asked.

"I slept with his girlfriend," Davii said matter-of-factly.

"Rock on," Derek said in awe.

"His girlfriend broke up with him, and he stopped calling me names. Who wants to be known as the guy whose girlfriend dumped him for a fag? There's always a way to fight back."

"Reminds me of Darlene Patterson," Vienna said. "I hated that snotty little bitch. One time she put gum in my hair. She thought I couldn't do anything, because I was the preacher's daughter. I had to love the sinner and hate the sin."

"What did you do?" Derek asked.

"I hated the sinner and scratched her eyes out after school. If you're being forced down, you have to claw your way up again."

"When I'm forced down, I find that it helps to relax the muscles in my throat," Davii said and ducked when Vienna threw her bread crust at him. He pointed at her and shouted, "Oppressor!"

"Oh, please," Vienna drawled. "You don't know oppression."

"How does a woman with such religious parents end up living with a gay man?" Derek asked.

"Daddy always said that love is love," Vienna said.

"Love doesn't follow creed, race, or whatever mental roadblock you want to put in front of it. Love is from the heart and soul. It has nothing to do with our bodies."

"Speak for yourself," Davii muttered.

"I think that's wonderful," Derek said.

"Daddy knows the Bible cover to cover," Vienna stated, "and he knows a lot of people twist its meaning to fit their own agenda. He never preached hate, only acceptance. As long as two people love each other, what's the harm in that?"

Derek looked at his watch. "I have to get back to work. I wish Natasha had gone to your daddy's church."

"Praise be to God," Vienna said, rolling her eyes. "I still have a half hour. I'll see you later."

As Derek left, Davii said, "I love to watch him walk away."

"It might help your agenda if you flirted with him," Vienna said. "Especially when he's actually at the table. Why don't you just ask him out?"

"How do I say this?" Davii asked aloud. He thought for a moment, idly making trails in a blob of ketchup with a French fry. "Derek's not like the guys I usually date."

"F* *k," Vienna clarified. "I'm sorry, but you don't date."

"Fine," Davii admitted, dropping the French fry and throwing up his hands in defeat. "He's not like the guys I usually pursue. He's sweet, smart, and he has integrity."

"He also has a boyfriend."

"He makes me want to be a better person, okay?" Davii blurted. "There. Happy? I see Derek and want to be more like him. I'd like to end up with someone like him." ■



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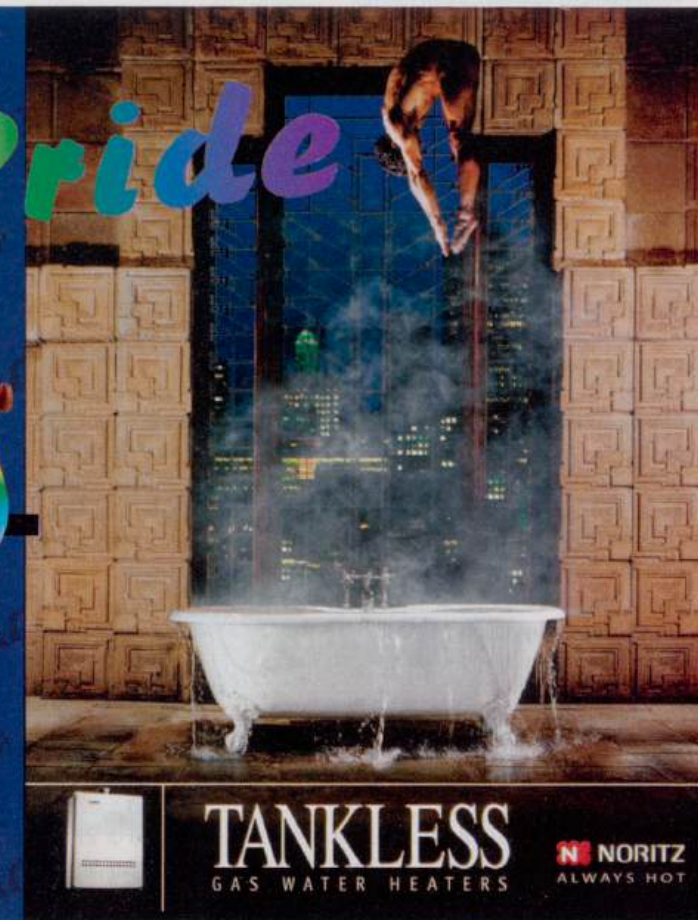
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Homebuyers Guide

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Home Buying Trends

Single women entering housing market in growing numbers

By Angela Green and Josef Molnar

For years young married couples provided the real estate and banking industries with a steady base of homebuyers who needed a mortgage to own their homes. But with the trend toward men and women marrying later in life or not at all, as well as the increasing acceptance of gay and lesbian people, those industries now have a growing base of homebuyers.

While more single men and women are becoming homeowners, the strongest growth has been among single females. In the last five years, single women have outpaced single men by a 2-to-1 margin when it comes to first-time homebuyers, according to National Association of Realtors statistics.

In 2003, single women bought one in five homes; men bought one in 10. The single female segment makes up about 18 percent of the home-buying population, the second largest demographic behind the traditional two-income family.

And as home ownership becomes less a symbol of domesticity and more a financial goal, the number of female homebuyers may be rising.

"I see women buying homes the minute they can buy one," says Karen Derr, owner

of Karen Derr and Associates Realty, a local real estate company. "It makes good sense. It's a steady investment, because the homes in the Houston area continue to appreciate."

While Derr is quick to stress that she works with many men who want to buy homes, she points out that the increasing acceptance of independent women over the past decades has affected the real estate and lending market.

"I think that as time has gone on, there's more equality in lending, and you see fewer instances of women being treated differently," Derr says. "Thirteen years ago, there used to be a 'single/sole box' next to the applicant name, but we fortunately don't deal with that anymore."

Terre Coffman, a Realtor with Coldwell Banker Swilley Hudson, says the potential homebuyers she works with who are looking at homes in the \$150,000 to \$250,000 range are evenly split between men and women.

"Seven or eight years ago there weren't as many women buying as there were before," Coffman says. "This will probably grow more because they're not waiting. They have gainful employment, they're comfortable in their position in life, and they're making their first purchase at around 26 or 27, which is good."

Coffman says she is working with several

women under the age of 32 who aren't presently involved in committed relationships but intend to purchase a home on their own.

And her clients have become more discriminating, Coffman says. Many of them have already done their research and know what they want and where. "They're pretty organized in their home searches. They may need to see quite a bit to make up their mind, but they know what they want."

She has also noticed a trend in the past few years away from higher-maintenance homes toward conveniences and location. New construction with lower maintenance in trendier and up-and-coming neighborhoods is now more popular.

The increase in home ownership is due largely to continuing low interest rates, flexible financing, and the prevalence of local and government programs that offer special incentives, according to experts, and that can only mean more women in different age groups will be looking at home ownership.

"I see single women nearing retirement that are buying for investments, women buying together," Coffman says. "I see a lot of mixture of women, and they're saving their money to buy a house."

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Open House

Marketing tradition is good for initial exposure

By Diane Schindwein and Josef Molnar

If you are a potential homeowner—and don't mind spending several hours of your free time driving around—Sunday afternoon open house-looking can be a good thing. It is one way to get a feel for the real estate market and can help you meet local real estate agents.

However, if you have your home on the market, don't depend on an open house to bring in a buyer, according to several real estate brokers. Still, they say that open houses do serve a purpose.

Real estate open houses are held each weekend. While most of those open houses are hosted by licensed brokers, others are held by owners attempting to sell their own homes.

Hundreds of people attend area open houses, but that number varies from week to week, often depending on the season or the weather. Often neighbors will stop in to see the homes.

"People just like seeing other people's houses," says Jose McDonald, owner of Jose McDonald Realty. "When your friend buys a new house, they show it around. It seems like a spectator sport."

Wade Knight, an agent with Martha Turner, doesn't rely on open houses. In fact, he rarely holds one that isn't insisted on by the seller, apart from new construction.

"An open house on new construction is different, because it's a great way for developers to pick up buyers," he says. "Single family homes do better with open houses than resale townhomes, and the Heights is the perfect area for open houses."

Much of Knight's business is conducted inside the Loop, where townhomes are more prevalent.

Kayvan Hagheykar, owner of Heritage Home Builders, uses the appeal of his Montrose and River Oaks-area townhomes, as well as features such as hidden surround-sound speakers and Mediterranean-style construction, to draw people to his open houses.

"It makes a big difference," he says, "because people like to see different products, and the open house gives them an opportunity to preview the property in their own time, instead of having to make an appointment."

Hagheykar says the convenient show times mean people are able to leave and return with others.

"If a family member comes by, they can bring friends or family members to come back and see it, too," he says. "Also, the person hold-

then eventually selling that prospective buyer another home.

If, given these statistics, a seller decides to go ahead and have an open house, McDonald has a few suggestions.

"Definitely make sure it's clean," he says. "Make sure it smells good. Use the old trick of baking cookies to make it seem more homey. Make sure all of your rooms are well lit. Turn on all of the lights, because it makes it seem brighter and larger.

"Also, let your neighbors know about the home, because sometimes they'll sell it for you."

Open house "lookers" will want to notice the overall condition of the home and take note of major construction details and storage spaces. If the home is furnished, try to imagine what it would be like without the furniture. Take a look around the neighborhood. Are there children playing outside? Are people working in their yards? Do they seem friendly? Are there dogs barking?

Many real estate agents like to hold open houses to meet

potential customers. They find that many people attending open houses haven't been to a bank for loan preapproval, are building a home and want ideas, or are just curious to see what is on the market. Still, Knight says, newer agents will often volunteer to host open houses so they can increase their customer base.

That's why many Realtors suggest that reading newspaper ad sections and driving around neighborhoods is better if you're just beginning a house hunt. Searcy relies on the Internet to generate foot traffic to his Glenbrook Valley homes. He rarely puts out more than a sign or two. And for the secluded neighborhood, that may be all he needs.

"Open houses can help encourage people to venture into the neighborhood," he says, "not only for the house but also the neighborhood."



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House Hunting

75 percent of home buyers begin search on the web

By Steve Tarter and Josef Molnar

When Karen Derr opened Karen Derr and Associates in Houston in 1994, she had a small operation with seemingly little chance of growing rapidly. That is, until she decided to place her property listings on her website.

The Internet catapulted her local listings to the exclusive and lucrative relocation market, which was previously limited to powerhouses such as Century 21 and Re/Max that had the branch networks and resources to maintain a database of properties for buyers from around the nation and the world.

The decision was perfect for her business, Derr says. "The Internet gave us the kind of momentum we wouldn't have had before."

"There is no business more suited to the Internet than real estate, except pornography," she adds with a laugh.

Technology has boosted the real estate and lending professions in other ways as well.

With wireless, high-speed access to information and communication now available with a few keystrokes in the palm of a hand, technology has provided people in the real estate and lending industries with a faster way to transact business.

"It's amazing what technology has done to the real estate industry," says Lloyd Lee, a Re/Max agent.

Gone are the days, he says, when real estate agents carried a pocket of change to call their offices and find out the latest information printed on a particular property. Even then some of the information was incorrect or out of date at the time it was printed, making the buying process lengthier and more inconvenient for buyers, agents, and lenders. Now direct access to property information from county records gives more accurate information whenever it is needed.

"It's more efficient, more effective, and you can get correct information right away," he says. "If you have remote access, you can pull up information as you're showing the home, so you can get the price, square foot-

age, a multitude of information."

But having better, faster, and more accurate access to information also means that the competition to stay ahead keeps agents and agencies busy. Re/Max builds that into its business, Lee says.

"We stay on the cutting edge of technology," Lee says. "We have satellite training programs, DSL high-speed access, a digital copier that can image a document to fax, mass distributed mailings, anything. Most agents have cell phones or palm computer/cell phone combinations. And

ing lenders about rates and qualifying clients for a loan is easier via the web, she says.

"It's a lot easier for me to qualify someone now," Reeves says. "We used to have to fax information out and wait to get a response, but now I can do it all myself."

"I keep my laptop with me all the time, because I can do my work at any time, 24 hours a day."

The saturation of technology works both ways. According to the National Association of Realtors, more than 75 percent of those searching for a house now start on the Internet, and that fact has created a new crop of potential homebuyers with more knowledge about the industry and their options than before.

"Today many people look up property data online and go to the open house before meeting with a real estate agent," Derr says. "It cuts out a big part of the process for the real estate agent and the buyer, since the buyer has had a chance to find out what kind of home they want and in what area."

Clients also expect more from their agents than before. Although access to home listings used to be the province of real estate professionals, extensive listing networks shared by many real estate companies means Realtors and brokers need to be able to offer more.

"You can't just be a 'super-agent' with exclusive access to certain homes anymore," Derr says. "Now clients choose you based on your negotiating skills or personality. We've now become more professional because we are now more valued for our negotiating skills and number crunching than before."

But with everything that technology offers, there are some things that it can't, including the human touch.

"I don't interact a lot by technology," Reeves says. "There are some things it's better to talk to someone about face-to-face. I prefer to talk to my real estate agents because it's more involved, and I get a better sense of what they need, but we do share some information online."

if at any time you need a document, we go to it on CD and get that for you."

Dawn Reeves, owner of Diverse Lending, a mortgage broker, uses her laptop's wireless connection to work from her current location, whether it is from her home or in another state.

"With my business, I can pick up and go to California for a week and never miss a beat," Reeves says. "It makes me a more mobile broker."

Reeves's clients can also get information about potential decisions more quickly. Her web-site allows them to access mortgage information and even fill out an application on a secure page, which she can access. And contact-



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Market Value

Home appraisal helps buyers size up property

By Dianne Crown and Josef Molnar

Home appraisals are done to estimate market value, close an estate, conduct a feasibility study, and more. For the purpose of selling a home, the key to maximizing marketability and getting a good appraisal is to look with the eyes of a prospective buyer, say two Houston real estate professionals. The first factor is neatness.

"The house should be in neat and tidy condition," says Richard Hill with Keller Williams Realty. "If you walk into a house that's a mess, you can't see the house."

Blake Bonnette, a Realtor with Absolute Realty Group, agrees.

"You want to make sure your house is in sell condition," he says. "Make sure anything visible to the eye that needs to be repaired is repaired. You need your home to show as well as possible."

"When you have company coming over to

your house, you want it to look that way. If you maintain it in showing condition, it will enhance the house's marketability."

Pay attention to the outside, Hill says. "Curb appeal makes a big difference," he says. "Keep your lawn staying trim and the outside condition good, because curb appeal is number one. Put a fresh coat of paint on the outside."

Inside, a home seller has one chance to make a first impression on a buyer, Bonnette says. Make sure the house is ready. Paint if it needs paint. If it needs new carpet, put it in.

And remember that odors can turn off a buyer more quickly than anything else, especially if the homeowner has a pet.

"You don't want a house to smell like wet dogs," Bonnette says. "You want an odor-free house, that's for sure."

Keep your pets restrained in an insignificant space in the house, or better yet, find a place to

keep them when you think the home will be shown. Not all people like animals, and some people are afraid that the animal could attack them.

"Be careful if you have dogs running around the house," Bonnette says. "I know some agents who won't even show the house if there is a dog running around."

Remember, you are not trying to impress yourself, Hill says, but someone who may have very different tastes, so appealing to the highest common denominator is a good goal. That includes the house's appearance.

"Touch it up so it looks well taken care of," he says. "People get their opinion of the house in the first two minutes. They're making up their mind about the place from the point they are in front of the house."

In addition, de-clutter everywhere. The prospective buyer is looking at your house, not your possessions, Hill says.

"With little houses in the city, people need to take their stuff out because often we have more things than we need. So they need to remove them and put them in storage," he says. "The spartan look looks better architecturally. You can see all of the house that way."

Major improvements aren't necessarily an advantage, though. Since older houses are often competing with the multitude of new house designs available, it's important to keep the house from looking old and worn. One of the most important things, Bonnette says, is to repair and repaint nicks, scratches, and dents in the walls. After that, try to take note of interesting features in the home that may not be available in other homes.

For some, maybe it's 9-foot ceilings; for others, it may be ceramic tile flooring.

"Anything that the house features that most houses don't, you want to point to that," Bonnette says. "Each home has its own qualities, so obviously that is a feature you would want to point out in any home."

To some, a house seems made-to-order, despite what an appraiser may think. Whether through location, style, or features, some houses are worth enough to buyers that bidding wars carry the sale price above the actual value of the home. Attractive fea-

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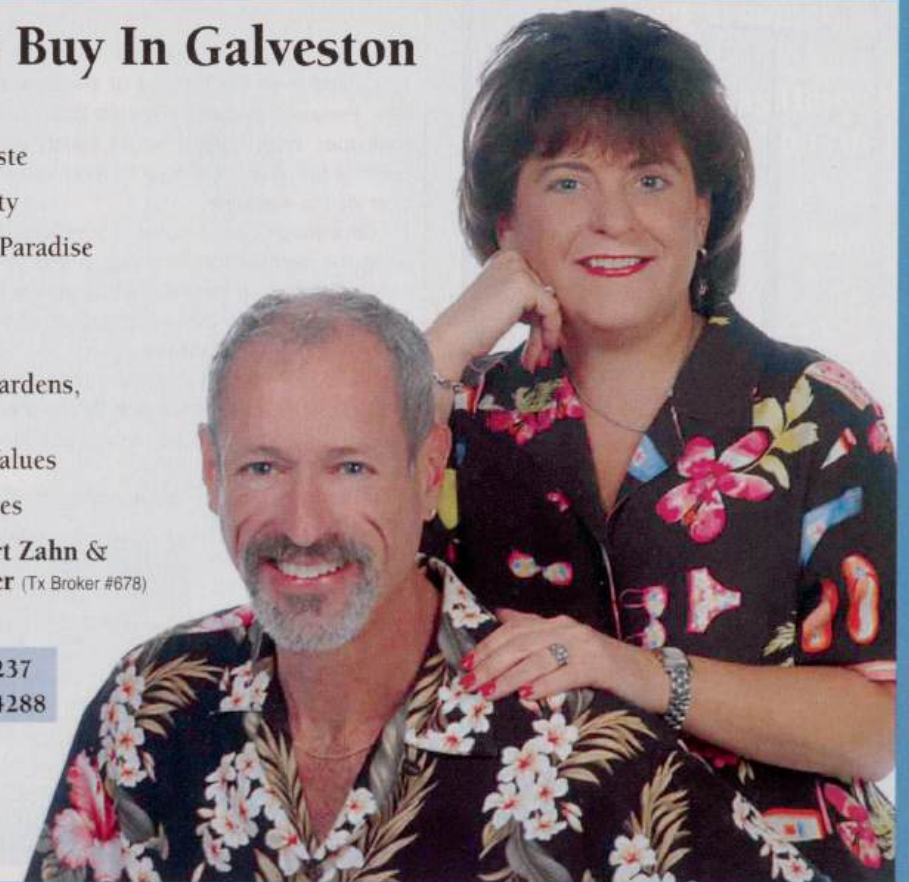
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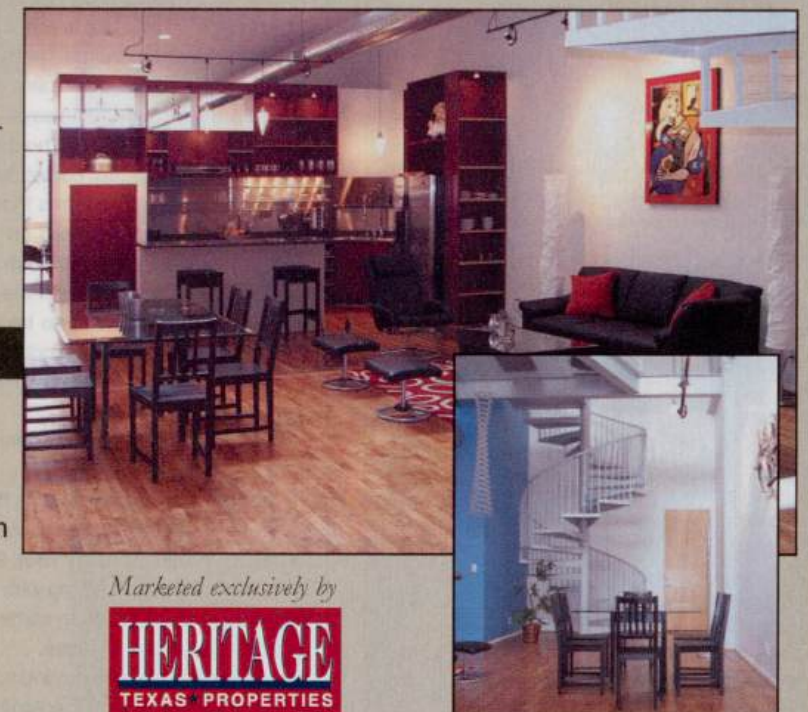
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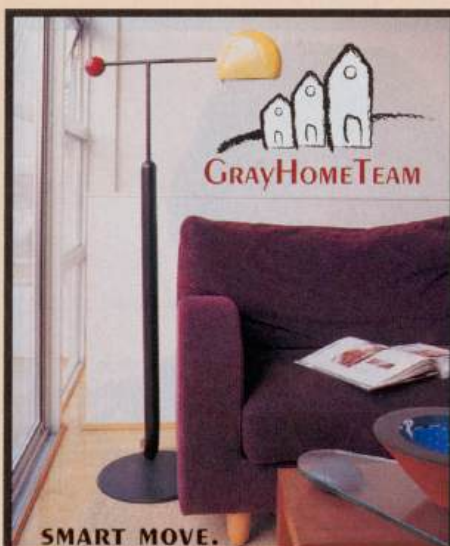
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tures can include countertops, bathroom fixtures, and even the number of electrical outlets. Personal features such as red, flocked wallpaper, shag carpet, bright canary-yellow paint or the kids' Jack-and-Jill room rarely go over well to everyone.

Go through open houses in your area. See what the competition is doing in your price range. Know your market. Also keep track of any homes sold by owners and share that information with the appraiser.

But go with your gut instinct about a place. If you think the house is worth it, and the appraisal and inspection are clear, that's all you need.

"It's not so much the appraisal that you should be worried about," Bonnette says. "You can list a house for whatever price you want, and if someone walks in and falls in love with it, and they're asking for the house at \$20,000 over the market price, they'll buy it."

But be careful, because some of a house's best features can never be calculated on an appraiser's form, which means the bank may not think that amazing house is worth the sale price, says Laura Locastro, who works in business development for StarTex Title Company.

"As far as the title company is concerned, a perceived higher value doesn't affect the bank's decision to lend the money, but it could terminate a contract if the sales price is higher than appraised value," she says.

Since a home may not hold the same appeal to everyone in the market, lenders tend to be wary of agreeing to terms that may not pay off if the home is foreclosed on and resold to recoup the investment. Although some lenders may decide to continue with the loan, it is not an automatic agreement, so be sure to check with the lender during a bidding war to see if they will agree to a higher-than-appraised value, Locastro says.

As for appraisers, they generally tend to stick to the numbers.

"An appraiser is looking for the overall value of the property and the overall condition," Hill says. "If the appraiser sees something out of the ordinary that is wrong with the house, he can require an inspector to come in, which can lower the value of the house."

"An appraiser walks around for five minutes, takes measurements of the various rooms and

determines the overall value."

The goal, he says, is to determine if factors such as square footage or features such as dual air conditioning or an in-ground pool warrant an increase in the value of a home. Otherwise, the amazing trim or well-done mosaic tile in the kitchen doesn't affect the price of the home.

Appraisal fees vary considerably depending on the purpose of the appraisal and the appraiser hired to do the job and can range from a couple of hundred dollars to more than \$1,000. Much of the process is governed by federal legislation, the 1989 Financial Institution Reform, Recovery and Enforcement Act, which dictates who can hire an appraiser,

when certification is required, and more.

Other elements of the appraisal are guided by an appraiser's professional relationships and the continuing education required for membership in these organizations. If you are looking for your own appraiser,



look for those who maintain membership in the Appraisal Institute, a national organization made up of five participating appraisal groups, including the National Association of Independent Fee Appraisers. But for home buyers and sellers, the most straightforward way to ensure an acceptable appraisal is for the lending institution to hire the appraiser.

Hill also suggests having a thorough home inspection before the appraisal. A good home inspection will note any hazardous materials, such as asbestos insulation, as well as any structural and mechanical features that need work.

Once the appraisal is completed, be sure to get a copy of it. If you are a seller ordering the appraisal, the appraiser can tell you what specifically can be tackled to increase the home's marketability.

And don't worry: The greatest exposure is in the first two weeks a house is listed, so don't rush to the market.

Be out of the house when prospective buyers come for a showing. They won't feel free otherwise to open closets and really look closely at what the home has to offer.

Turn on every light—closets, over the stove, basement. Make sure every window blind is open, especially in fall and winter. This will help the agent show the house and sends the "Take a good look" signal to the buyer.

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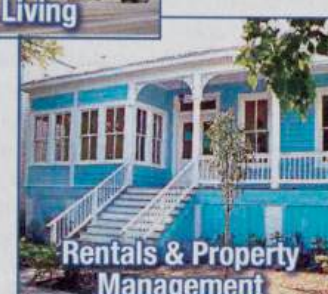
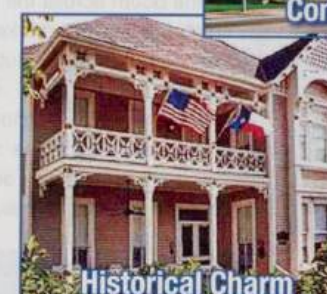
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Creative Risk

"Exotic" loans not for everyone

By Emmet Pierce and Josef Molnar

When she bought her two-bedroom condominium in mid-2004, Elizabeth Eure didn't envision herself one day sleeping on an egg-crate mattress in an empty unit.

The furniture was gone in December because Eure was preparing to move, awaiting the close of escrow. After living there less than a year and a half, she had sold her San Diego home to cut her losses. Her monthly mortgage payment of \$2,500 was too much for her to handle.

"It was a mistake," Eure, 29, says of the purchase. "If I could do it all over again, I would have rented an apartment."

With these kinds of horror stories increasing the more the national housing market softens, it can be difficult to confidently choose the right kind of loan. But knowing about the loan type you are being offered can help you make a sound decision, even when experts continue to caution consumers about the consequences of poor decisions.

The majority of people with rapidly-rising mortgage payments have adjustable-rate mortgages, or ARMs, which fluctuate depending on the interest rates at the time. In many cases, introductory fixed-rate payments are beginning to adjust upward, to prevailing interest rates. Dianne Wilkman, president of Springboard, a nonprofit credit-counseling service, foresees widespread problems for buyers who have assumed heavy debt in pricey markets. Through the use of creative new lending products, Wilkman warns that many "are shoe-horning themselves into home loans with duct tape and spit."

But Cody Grizzoffi with Countrywide Home Loan Mortgage says the changes in the loan should be acceptable if the customer is informed about the product.

"Major personal problems aside," he says, "a lot of that has to do with what kind of program they were put in and that they may not understand what happens over time with their loan. So I caution people to be careful and ask questions, because most lenders tell you what they think you need to know."

Creative lending products have only been introduced in the past few years, and those

loans haven't been tested during a period of declining home prices and rising interest rates, says Nicolas Retsinas, director of Harvard's Joint Center for Housing Studies.

"We don't know how they are going to perform," he says. "If the economy starts to struggle, if there are job losses, then you could have some very serious problems."

John Frels of the Mortgage Association of Texas and president of the Greater Houston Association of Mortgage Brokers, says the steadily growing housing market in Houston, as well as the boom across the rest of the country, has created a thriving marketplace that makes creative loans possible. But, he warns, those options may not last.

"We are in a false economy as far as mortgages are concerned," he says. "The factors that are there should say something else, but people keep buying homes, so the loans are there for people to buy."

Eure says she purchased her condo for about \$335,000 with an "80-20" loan, one of the

products designed to help moderate-income borrowers qualify for loans in high-cost areas. The transaction was structured as two separate mortgages, she says. The first was for 80 percent of the purchase price, and the other was for 20 percent. She says the loan was fixed for two years. It then had the potential to adjust upward with prevailing rates.

"They do that because in order to avoid mortgage insurance, you can't pay more than 80 percent of the home amount in a loan," says Sharon Neider of Neider Mortgage. "The payments on that kind of loan are less than they would be if you took out a fixed rate loan and had to get mortgage insurance."

PARADISE LOST

But it was the size of Eure's loan, not the adjustable component, that got her into trouble. She says she recently left the Navy, where she had worked as a health-care administrator. Once unemployed, she realized she would have to find a roommate to share



Homeowners Insurance

The landscape for homeowners insurance in Texas has changed dramatically over the last few years. The mold crisis followed by Tropical Allison and most recently with the hurricanes of last summer and fall continue to have an impact on the coverage and rates of Texas homeowners. The areas have a direct impact on the consumer are:

- Coverage for the various types of water damage (other than rising waters) that can and do occur
- Coverage for foundation damage caused by slow water leaks
- Coverage and deductibles applicable to Windstorm and Hail coverage
- Coverage for Replacement Cost vs. Actual Cash Value
- All Risk Coverage vs. Named Perils Coverage

Optional coverage that all consumers should consider:

- Voluntary Flood Insurance, first have the understanding that all of Harris County is at risk from rising waters, regardless of whether or not the home is located in an official FEMA Flood Zone. 65% of the 70,000 homes damaged by Tropical Storm from rising



TONY MAY

waters were not located in an official FEMA Flood Zone. For those homes not located in a Flood Zone the coverage is typically less than 85 cents per day.

- Do you have high value items such as jewelry, furs or fine arts? Most policies have limitations in regards to coverage for these items, but most companies can provide an endorsement or companion policy to protect you at a very reasonable rate.
- Finally, consider packaging your home and auto insurance package with one carrier to multiply discounts on each.

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expenses or sell. She decided she would rather move to a cheaper housing market.

Eure says she sold the unit for \$360,000. Because repairs and buyer closing costs were a condition of the sale, she didn't make a profit.

"I really am losing," she said. "I ended up in the hole \$5,611.31."

Borrowers who choose highly leveraged loans need to have an exit strategy in place in case their income doesn't rise before their low-cost introductory rates end, Grizoffi says.

"You really need to think about things that could change at some point in the future," he says, "whether it's health or your job status."

SHOP AROUND

Creative or "exotic" mortgages come in many variations, but they generally allow home buyers to purchase homes with relatively little money down, Frels says.

"Anybody with some sort of credit can get some sort of mortgage today," he says. "More companies are providing 100 percent financing where people don't put anything down."

But he cautions people to be aware that the type of loan you get can fluctuate. There typically is a "honeymoon" period in which monthly mortgage payments are low, but eventually they are adjusted to coincide with prevailing interest rates.

A second option is to pay only the interest on the principal. That prevents the balance owed from growing but doesn't reduce the debt. A third option is to treat the mortgage like a standard, 30-year fixed loan and make a fully-amortized payment.

If the borrower's situation improves, he or she can treat the loan as a 15-year fixed mortgage and make a larger payment that reduces the principal and increases equity more rapidly.

While such loans work for now, if housing prices drop, the loan amount will remain the same, making your loan greater than the value of your home.

Federal bank regulators share that concern. On December 20, five institutions, including the Federal Reserve Board and the Office of the Comptroller of the Currency, called upon banks to closely weigh the ability of borrowers to repay

such loans against the higher mortgage payments that may take effect when low-cost introductory periods end. They urged banks to make sure they have adequate funds on hand to protect themselves from losses if untested loan products fail. Consumers should be adequately warned about "the risks of these products," these federal experts say.

For homebuyers with a good credit history and a low chance of job loss in the next few years, these situations should not be a factor. These kinds of situations occur with buyers with poor credit who choose an option that is not best for their current situation, or for buyers whose employment may not be stable enough to guarantee that they can manage their loan payments.

Roy Hall, an agent with Deem Realty, says it comes down to whose interests the lending institution is thinking of first.

"You have to be versed in your lending products," he says, "and you have to get very personal with the client to figure out where they are coming from. Otherwise, no one is going to be happy."

Understand Risks of Creative Loans

By Emmet Pierce

Creative mortgage loans keep the wheels of the housing industry turning by maximizing consumer buying power. They allow middle-wage earners to continue buying high-priced homes. The trade-off is an increased risk of default. Some say it's a reversal of a decades-old trend of protecting borrowers. Supporters hold that such loans make homeownership possible for people who otherwise would remain priced out of the market.

Adjustable rate mortgages (ARMs) can't increase beyond agreed-upon annual caps that generally range between 2 percent and 6 percent. Unlike traditional fixed-rate loans, these mortgages often are viewed as short-term vehicles for attaining homeownership. In some cases, borrowers may plan to refinance or sell before low-cost introductory rates adjust upward. That requires a higher level of awareness on the part of consumers.

Here are several examples of creative loans:

NO-DOCUMENTATION OR LOW-DOCUMENTATION

Such products allow people to borrow without fully documenting their income.

Most lenders expect consumers to have a FICO credit score of at least 680. Risk: Critics say this type of loan almost invites consumers to borrow more than they truly can afford. Depending on their credit score and how much documentation they provide, the rate may be one-half to two points higher than a standard loan.

INTEREST-ONLY ADJUSTABLES

Payments cover only the loan's interest, not the principal debt, during the first three to 10 years. Risk: After the interest-only period ends, payments could increase beyond the borrower's ability to pay.

OPTION OR FLEX-PAYMENT ARM

The borrower can decide how much to pay every month, a 30- or 15-year fully amortized payment, just the interest, or minimum payments that don't cover interest. Risk: If you lack discipline, you may wind up owing more money than your home is worth. If you make only minimum payments, the rest of that month's interest is added onto your loan balance.

40-YEAR FIXED

The borrower repays the fixed-rate loan over 40 years instead of the standard 15 or 30. This cre-

ates smaller monthly payments and increases the size of the loan a buyer may qualify for. Risk: It will take longer to build home equity. Unless the buyer sells or refinances, he or she will pay more interest over the life of their loan.

SIMULTANEOUS SECOND OR PIGGYBACK LOAN

Borrowers with little money for down payments can achieve 100 percent financing by taking out two loans. They also avoid the need to buy private mortgage insurance, which usually is required for people who can't come up with a down payment of at least 20 percent. Risk: If home prices drop, you could end up owing more than your home is worth.

MORE INFORMATION:

There is a wide variety of lending information available on the Internet. Web-sites include HSH Financial Associates at www.HSH.com; Freddie Mac at www.freddiemac.com; Fannie Mae at www.fanniemae.com; consumer advocate ACORN Housing at www.acornhousing.org.



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Homeowners Insurance

Tips for getting the best coverage, compensation

By Amy Denney and Josef Molnar

Purchasing homeowners insurance isn't as simple as calling a couple of companies to compare quotes. There are many factors to keep in mind to make sure all your personal effects are covered and that you will be adequately compensated in the event of a personal injury, experts say. You will also want to be sure you're getting the most bang for your buck.

One way to lower your premium is to select a reasonable deductible. Since insurance was designed to cover catastrophic damage to a home and not maintenance-related issues, a higher deductible, while more expensive, will reduce your insurance rate substantially. Some people try to cut back on their coverage as a way to save money.

There are a couple other benefits, too. A higher deductible means you won't have to mess with filing petty claims, and you won't risk being cancelled for filing too many claims in a short time period.

Although insurers are sympathetic to their clients who experience bad luck, most weed

out customers who file claims for small incidents, since that can raise everyone's costs.

The point, says Jeffrey Bules with Insurance Associates Group, is to keep in mind what insurance is designed for.

"Too many people treat their homeowners policies as maintenance policies, instead of as catastrophic damage coverage, which is what they're supposed to be used for," Bules says.

Most insurers will offer a claims-free discount that can mean as much as 20 percent off premiums. Some companies even offer a discount for new customers who were claims-free with their last company.

There is a claims system in the insurance industry, Bules says. Not only do claims put a flag on your insurance account and possibly result in a higher premium, but if you decide to sell the home, the future owners might find that the reputation of the house and its previous owners results in higher payments.

But be careful when you're selecting your insurance policy. Although insurance

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companies in Texas used to provide generic insurance policies for homeowners, times have changed, and so have the companies. An increase in insurance claims over the past few years has made many insurers exclude anything but basic coverage, and price-conscious consumers tend to whittle that down to save money.

"They get so price-conscious they don't know what they're getting," Bules says. It used to be that if you were insurance shopping, you would get five different rates on the same basic policy, but policies are now very, very different between companies.

"You can get a cheaper policy, but it doesn't mean you're covered for certain things," he adds. "And unless you're an insurance expert, the only time you find out you're not covered is when something happens."

When looking for an insurer, Bules suggests sticking with an established, reputable company.

"Pick your agent because they can help you, not whether they are straight or gay," he says. "Remember that integrity and trust are important, and it's not in an 800 number. If you sit down with someone who just wants to wrap it up, you need to wonder if they will be around if you have a problem."

"You get what you pay for," agrees Rob Schmerler, owner of the Schmerler Agency. "If you only focus on price, then you get less coverage. Coverages vary, so if you only focus on the price, the less likely you are to have a quality policy. Be sure to ask lots of questions and balance the price and coverage."

Purchasing home and auto insurance from the same company might be beneficial since nearly every insurer offers a multiple policy discount. Also be sure to verify that your policy language includes "replacement cost" for your home and possessions, instead of "actual cash value," since everything in your home gets depreciated.

There are certain restrictions in every policy, including acts of war, rodent and termite damage, earth movement, and floods. Additional coverage can be purchased for mine subsidence, earthquakes, sump pump failure/storm sewer backup, and flooding.

"The main thing you want to get is flood insurance," Schmerler says. "The water damage part of home insurance never covers floods. It's always separate."

Don't rely on flood zone information as an indicator to determine whether you need insurance in the Houston area, Bules says. He points out that 70 percent of losses from Tropical Storm Allison were in areas where

flood insurance was not required.

"Technically everyone in the state is in a flood zone," Bules says, "because every area can flood at some time or another."

Additional premium discounts might be available for homeowners who have fire extinguishers, smoke alarms, or burglar alarms in their homes, Bules says, especially monitored systems that automatically generate a report when the smoke alarm or burglar alarm is triggered. Deadbolt locks on exterior doors often qualify for a discount, too.

If you operate a business, even a small one, from your home, it won't be covered by the homeowner policy. That means if your dog bites someone who comes to your house for business reasons, you're out of luck. Incidental business activity coverage tends to be inexpensive, though, running less than \$100 a year.

"Buying an insurance policy is similar to buying a car," Schmerler says. "Both come with standard equipment as well as options that can be added for extra."

HELPFUL TIPS

The price you pay for homeowners insurance can vary depending on your individual circumstances. Here are a few tips from the Insurance Information Institute to keep costs low:

- **Shop around:** Talk to several insurers to get quotes and information about service.
- **Raise your deductible:** Increasing your deductible could translate into lower premiums.
- **Use one insurer:** Most companies offer a discount if you buy both your home and auto policies from them.
- **Upgrade safety:** Insurers often offer discounts for fire extinguishers, smoke alarms, burglar alarms, and deadbolt locks.
- **Quit smoking:** Some insurers reduce premiums for nonsmokers.
- **Pursue group coverage:** Find out if the company offers discounts for members of a certain group, such as a business association.
- **Stick with your insurer:** Most companies will reduce premiums for long-term customers.
- **Check your possessions:** Review your coverage and compare it to your possessions at least once a year.

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Special Advertising Supplement

Tips and trends in the real estate market

BOOK SHELF

In recent years, authors have counseled consumers on how best to catch the wave of rising home prices. *Are You Missing the Real Estate Boom?* by economist David Lereah featured a cover illustration that showed a family watching helplessly as the home they desired soared high into the sky. The message was buy now, before prices rise higher.

In Frank McKinney's *Maverick Approach to Real Estate Success*, readers were told they could start out with a \$50,000 fixer-upper and end up with a mansion.

Recent books have taken on a different tone. *Cash in on the Coming Real Estate Crash* by David J. Decker and George G. Sheldon offers tips on how to "turn a profit after the bubble bursts." *House Poor* by June Fletcher warns readers about "pumped up prices, rising rates and mortgages on steroids."

Even more scary, *Sell Now!* by John R. Talbott says we're at the height of a dangerous peak in housing prices.

So is it time to sell out and wait for the crash? Not at all, says Eric Tyson, co-author of the *Home Buying for Dummies* real estate primer.

Doom-and-gloom predictions are capitalizing on a growing sense that the housing boom of recent years is ending, he says.

"It's no great secret that there has been a lot of talk and concern about a real estate bubble" that is ready to burst, he says.

Even so, most housing economists are predicting a "soft landing" as markets gradually cool. For most buyers, Tyson says, real estate remains a sound long-term investment.

WHO YOU GONNA CALL?

When moving out of the city or state, how do you find a good real estate agent in your new town? A study shows that the best agent is the one you've been using.

According to the 2005 Profile of Referral and Relocation Activity, 40 percent of all real estate firms surveyed has a referral program and a fifth of all firms have an affinity program to generate leads.

The survey was conducted by the National Association of Realtors and Worldwide ERC,

an association for work-force mobility.

Other findings show that large firms are 46 percent more likely to use referrals to relocate employees. Internet leads are most frequently used by smaller firms offering referral programs.

Over a third of real estate agencies offer a reduction in the commission percentage as a benefit to home buyers and sellers who are members of an affinity group.

"We see in many situations that both consumers and real estate professionals benefit through referrals," says Thomas M. Stevens, NAR president.

DREAM LAWN

There's green in that green. Reports show a healthy lawn can add megabucks to the sale price of a home.

Richard Roll, president of the American Homeowners Association, says, "Unlike many home improvements, an investment in your lawn will increase your home's value without triggering an increase in property taxes."

ACCORDING TO:

- *Money* magazine: A kitchen remodel returns 75 percent of its cost and a bathroom redo as little as 20 percent, while landscaping investments are estimated to return at least 100 percent and up to 200 percent of their costs.
- Homegain.com: An investment of \$500 in lawn improvements is likely to yield 400 percent of that amount in a higher selling price.
- Clemson University and the University of Maryland: Well-designed landscaping prompts many buyers to pay 11.3 percent above the asking price of a home.
- Society of Real Estate Appraisers: Ninety-nine percent of the members say that nice landscaping increases speed of home sales.
- Gallup survey: More than 44 percent of U.S. homeowners surveyed said that an increased real estate market value was the most important benefit of a well-maintained landscape.

PUTTING THE FAB IN PREFABRICATED

If you think prefabricated housing is a fairly recent invention, think again: There's evidence that the first modular homes in this country were shipped across the Atlantic Ocean from England to the Colonies in the 1600s.

Although prefab homes reached a pinnacle of popularity in the 1950s, the better to accommodate returning servicemen and their burgeoning baby-booming families, there's a resurgence in interest because of current out-of-sight costs for housing.

Designer Michael Buchanan has authored a new book, *Prefab Home* (Gibbs Smith), that gives us some insight into how these populist homes came about, how they're constructed, and how best to decorate one.

Photographers Franklin and Esther Schmidt provide a photo-fest of the process followed in the construction of a home from start to finish.

Then, Buchanan shows us decorating styles for the modular home that incorporate Arts and Crafts design, cottage chic, and even an African motif.

This book shows that affordable housing doesn't have to mean cheap looking.

CURB APPEAL

"Your front entrance is so important when making that first impression, because it's really the 'face' of your home," says Lou Manfredini, Ace Hardware's Helpful Hardware Man and home improvement expert. "It's smart to keep the entryway in top shape whether you're selling your house or staying in it for years to come."

Easy improvements from Manfredini and Ace to help give your home a facelift:

- Repair the walkway: Patch cracks and replace loose bricks and pavers. Rent a power washer or purchase a chemical treatment to clean up embedded stains in concrete.
- Illuminate the path: Lighting helps ensure guests arrive safely and also acts as a theft deterrent. Clean light fixtures and replace burnt-out bulbs with energy-saving CFL bulbs, replace outdated fixtures, and add landscape lighting to brighten walkways and shrubbery.
- Use foliage and shrubbery: Strategically placed plants can conceal any unattractive aspects of your house or surroundings. Place large pots or hanging baskets around a stoop or porch. Bushes or hedges hide air conditioning units or propane tanks.
- Prune and mulch: Prune dead branches, trim back overgrown shrubbery, or remove obstructive plantings. Spread mulch or bark around trees, shrubs, and flowers for a weed-free, well-kept look.
- Decorate your door: Restore the luster of your door by polishing the hinges and knobs. Paint or stain the door with a color that stands out, yet complements the trim and siding. Hang a pretty wreath. ■



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Gay-Friendly Automotive Resource Gets a Makeover

Gaywheels.com, the gay-friendly automotive resource, launched a sleek new design as "phase one" in preparation for a major expansion of its new car information database.

"I think of this new design as the first stage of our facelift," said Joe LaMuraglia, founder of Gaywheels.com. "We improved the way we look and feel, but there is more to come. We're setting the stage for our biggest reveal ever—coming soon."

Gaywheels.com facilitates commerce with gay-friendly companies throughout the vehicle purchase process. Users of the site are able to investigate which automakers and other automotive companies offer domestic partner benefits to their employees, thus qualifying them as "gay-friendly." With that information at hand, they can make educated choices while researching vehicles and beginning the car-buying process.

"We've been live since June 2005. In that time, we've received feedback from our consumers that has helped us shape the new design. We have made the site faster to load, easier to navigate, and generally more useful," added LaMuraglia. "We strive to deliver the most relevant information to the GLBT car-buying public pertaining to researching, financing, and insuring a new vehicle."

Users of Gaywheels.com can read vehicle reviews by GLBT writers, verify which companies are gay-friendly, request a free insurance quote, apply for a loan, and contact a local dealer, all via gay-friendly business partners.

U.S. Gay and Lesbian Automotive Consumers Favor Import and Luxury Brands, Hybrid Demand Strong

U.S. gay, lesbian, bisexual, and transgender (GLBT) automotive consumers favor luxury and import brands according to Harris Interactive AutoGLBT, a new market research study from Harris Interactive's Automotive and Transportation Research Practice.

"Gay and lesbian consumers are becoming an important target market for U.S. vehicle manufacturers, especially luxury brands," said Bryan Krulikowski, senior director of research, Harris Interactive(R). "Nearly three-quarters (72%) of GLBT consumers indicate they are more likely to consider purchasing a vehicle from a manufacturer that has spe-

cifically targeted automotive advertising to the GLBT community," said Krulikowski. He added, "Volkswagen, Subaru, Volvo and BMW are perceived as the top brands that extend the greatest outreach to the GLBT community through their marketing communications."

AutoGLBT study highlights include:

- According to the AutoGLBT study, GLBT consumers favor luxury brands versus non-luxury brands, though balancing image with affordability is a high priority.
- GLBT consumers (51%) are significantly more interested in hybrid electric vehicles than their nongay counterparts (34%) and feel that they are worth paying more money for.
- Automakers' quest to move away from "traditional" media sources—having more of an online presence and "viral marketing" focus—hits squarely at the GLBT consumer. This group relies heavily on both the Internet (62%) and "word-of-mouth" (45%) advice when deciding which vehicle to purchase.
- Gay males (17%) are more likely than the GLBT population on a whole (12%) to listen to satellite radio programming, with the majority of these respondents (67%) tuning in to GLBT-specific stations.

The AutoGLBT study was conducted online in the United States by Harris Interactive(R) between July 21 and August 1, 2005, among 2,818 self-identified gay, lesbian, bisexual, and transgender adults (aged 18 and over) and 2,121 heterosexual adults (aged 18 and over). Figures for age by gender, education, race/ethnicity, region, and income were weighted where necessary to bring them into line with their actual proportions in the population. Propensity score weighting was also used to adjust for respondents' propensity to be online.

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HIGH FASHION.

Texas boy **Jimmy James** is reinventing himself. Long known for uncanny vocal impersonations of divas from Bette to Liza and for drag incarnations of Marilyn and other screen sirens, James (who we profiled in "The Voice" in June 2004) has now transformed himself into a dance-music artist. He just released a sly, hook-rich CD single, *Fashionista*, which includes four mixes that are sure to keep the club kids moving. Our Steven David captured James when he opened for The Turtles (yes, those Turtles) in December at Stafford Centre.

GOOD WORKS. At the Transgender Unity Banquet on April 15, Dr. **Peggy Rudd** will award the first scholarships that bear her name. Her spouse, **Melanie Rudd**, will join her. Some proceeds from the annual gala at the Westchase Hilton support the Peggy Rudd Transgender Scholarship Fund ("A Legacy of Learning," April 2004 *OutSmart*). At the banquet, the Rudds will no doubt have stories from the April 2-9 TG Convention at Sea, one of the frequent Dignity Cruises they organize.

As chair of the Progressive Dinner this year, **Eva Geer** is prepping for that May 6 event organized by AssistHers and Uncommon Legacy Houston. For the fundraiser evening, buses transport diners to local homes for the four-course supper. Check out www.assisthers.org for tasty details.

Speaking of Uncommon Legacy-Houston, that estimable group's **Lois D. Meyer** recently sent a reminder that May 1 is the deadline for its new scholarship program for lesbian college students. Applicants can get the

requirements at www.uncommonlegacyhouston.org.

At its April 29 Roaring 20s Ball, Human Rights Campaign Houston will present state representative **Senfronia Thompson** ("To Fuel the Hell-Fire Flames of Bigotry," September 2005 *OutSmart*) with the John Walzel Political Equality Award and former Army specialist **Tommy Cook** with the Community Equality Award. BP will receive the Corporate Equality Award at the Hilton Americas event.

Christopher Ankney is one of the Houstonians pedaling in the 50-mile Hill Country AIDS Ride on April 29.

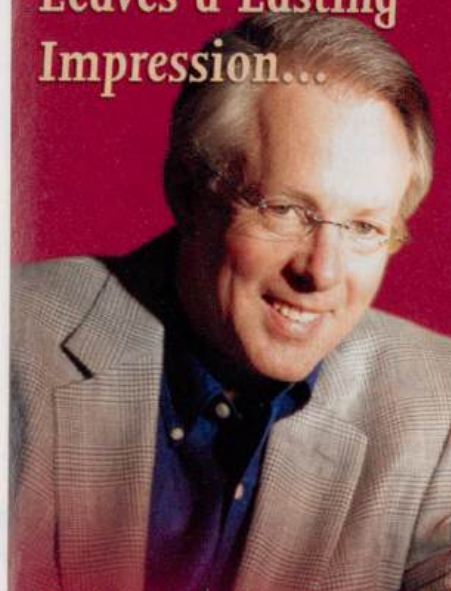
MOVIE NEWS. Rumors of the death of the Houston Gay & Lesbian Film Festival are greatly exaggerated. We heard that bit of scuttlebutt at the Pride Houston grand marshal reception, and dashed off an e-mail to the festival's **Zig Zigman**. She responded that the event is retooling but will definitely take place in September, probably at the Angelika Film Center. **Sixto Wagan**, the DiverseWorks performing arts director who is leading the festival transition team, also wrote in: "We're trying to reinvent the festival for its 10th year." **Kristian Salinas**, the former Museum of Fine Arts, Houston, film department and Rice Media Center stalwart who now lives on the Left Coast, is consulting with the film festival folks.

IN YOUR NEIGHBORHOOD. Montrose Counseling Center's **Sally Huffer** called with word that the agency will host a reception for all community volunteers on April 25 at Hollywood Vietnamese. This event is a local observance of the April 23-29 National Volunteer Week.

The terrific painter **David Aylsworth**, who we profiled in November 2004 ("Big Pictures"), is one of nine finalists for the high-toned Hunting Art Prize. Other finalists, all local artists, include **Francesca Fuchs** and **Gael Stack**. The winner of the \$50,000 purse—formerly based in London, now here—will be announced at an April 29 gala.

Those of you with Butch Cassidy and the Sundance Kid or Calamity Jane fantasies (or both!) will want to check out the exhibition *Dudes, Dames and Desperados: Printing in the 19th Century American West*, on view through April 30 at the Museum of Printing History. ■

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Sinéad O'Connor

(The Independent, via Out, 1/06)

There are people who say they represent Christ, but actually they preach against love, which is blasphemous as far as I am concerned. The teaching against homosexuality is blasphemy, for example. God created gay people, so who is anyone else to say you should not be gay?

Luther Vandross

(Out, 4/06, Steve Weinstein)

When Luther Vandross died in July 2005, the media turned up the volume on the artist's sexuality. "Though he never came out as gay, bisexual, or even straight, you had to be wearing blinders—as many of his fans, particularly female, must have been—to overlook his queerness," wrote Jason King in his obituary in *The Village Voice*. . . . "Everybody in the business knew that Luther was gay," says Gene Davis, a veteran television producer who worked with Vandross. . . . "His public and private personae were very different. That had a lot to do with his own sense of discipline. People around him kept his private life private."

Tori Amos

(Out, 3/06, Matthew Breen)

Amos, who played piano in gay bars in Washington, D.C., starting at age 13, says about her gay appeal, "I don't pander to the camp side that other people do. I can sit here and giggle with you about it and think that [camp] is heavenly sometimes and really well done, but there is another side to the gay and lesbian community that is trying to juggle the projections that people are putting on you. And if you're going to do that, then you'd better be f--king armed internally, because you cannot take on other people's judgments of who you are spiritually or you'll have those balls in the air for your whole existence. Everybody is ready to judge you guys, man."

Madonna

(Out, 4/06, Denis Ferrara)

Re: Madonna's nine-year-old daughter Lourdes.

And she even asked, "Mom, you know they say that you are gay?" And I'm, "Oh, do they? Why?" And she says, "Because you kissed Britney Spears" [onstage at the MTV Video Music Awards in 2003]. And I said, "No, it just means I kissed Britney Spears. I am the mommy pop star and she is the baby pop star. And I am kissing her and passing my energy on to her. Like, kind of a mythological fairy tale." And she looks at me like, "Yeah, whatever!" [Laughs]

Colin Farrell

(Interview, 4/03, Joel Schumacher)

Joel Schumacher (director of *Phone Booth*, starring Farrell): You've worked with some really big stars now, like Al Pacino, and Tom Cruise, Kiefer Sutherland and Forest Whitaker—do you ever think back to when you were a kid in Dublin and watched those people in movies?

Colin Farrell: Yeah. I remember having a huge love for videos. Your movie *The Lost Boys* [1987] was the first video I ever bought, and that was with . . .

That's the only reason I ever hired you.
That and the blow job!



Sarah Jessica Parker

(Out, 3/06, Michael Musto)

Michael Musto: [Y]ou must feel tremendous waves of love from the gays.

Sarah Jessica Parker: I was thrilled because with [*Sex and the City*] they were some of the first people to come to the party, as it were. They've shown such commitment and loyalty. It's like the friendship you want. I've worked on projects that for some reason or other appealed to gay people. They loved *Hocus Pocus*! Well, with you, Bette Midler, and Kathy Najimy in it, it couldn't have been any more gay-friendly.

I sense that wasn't Disney's reason for putting us together. [Laughs]

What's so gay about Sarah Jessica Parker (l), Bette Midler (c), and Kathy Najimy in 1993's *Hocus Pocus*?

Alonso Duralde: What's interesting to me about *Brokeback Mountain*

Harry Hamlin

(The Advocate, 3/14/06, Alonso Duralde)

is how much 14-year-old giggling there is in the mainstream media, even from Oprah, in talking about gay love and gay sex. Did you face a similar "tee-hee" factor when *Making Love* came out?

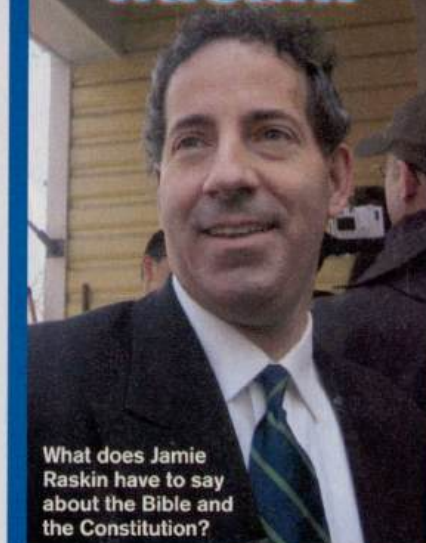
Harry Hamlin: I'm not so sure about the "tee-hee" factor; people were more angry about it. There was a backlash in the media of "What do you guys think you're doing?" and "This is stupid." A lot of the reviewers that I remember really got pissed off that we made this movie.

Was it the "tee-hee" factor or just plain anger that took over when Harry Hamlin (r) and Michael Ontkean made love in the 1982 film *Making Love*?

Queer Quotes

Compiled by Blase DiStefano

Jamie Raskin



What does Jamie Raskin have to say about the Bible and the Constitution?

(via PFLAG-Houston newsletter)

On March 1 in Annapolis, Maryland, a hearing on a proposed constitutional amendment to ban gay marriage was taking place. The far right wing was doing its usual best to frighten, anger, and intimidate the witnesses who dared disagree with them. Then Jamie Raskin, professor of law at American University, testified as to why the amendment should not be passed. At the end of his testimony, one of Maryland's most ultra-far-rightwingers, Republican Senator Nancy Jacobs, stood up and shouted: "Mr. Raskin, my Bible says marriage is only between a man and a woman. What do you have to say about that?" To which Mr. Raskin replied: "Senator, when you took your oath of office, you placed your hand on the Bible and swore to uphold the Constitution. You did not place your hand on the Constitution and swear to uphold the Bible."

JANE, LILY, & DOLLY

The talented trio make *Nine to Five* a must-have DVD



L-r: Jane Fonda, Lily Tomlin, Dolly Parton, and Dabney Coleman (seated).

The quintessential workplace comedy about being overworked, underpaid, and pushed to the edge by an ungrateful boss from hell clocks in with the *Nine to Five: Sexist, Egotistical, Lying, Hypocritical, Bigot Edition DVD*. Starring Jane Fonda, Lily Tomlin, Dabney Coleman, and Dolly Parton in her critically-acclaimed feature film debut, *Nine to Five* remains a comedy classic 25 years after its original release.

When three working women have had enough of their lecherous, egomaniacal boss, their ultimate fantasies about sticking it to the man come true in this witty, satirical send-up of office politics, sexism, and what it really takes to get ahead. Full of witty, social commentary, this delightful farce is every working person's dream as they turn the tables on their unruly boss. *Nine to Five* features Dolly Parton's Academy Award-nominated title song, which became an anthem for working people everywhere struggling to climb the corporate ladder.

The *Nine to Five: Sexist, Egotistical, Lying, Hypocritical, Bigot Edition DVD* goes into overtime with tons of bonus features including commentary by Fonda, Parton, Tomlin, and producer Bruce Gilbert; "Nine to 25" featurette highlighted by all-new interviews with Fonda, Parton, Tomlin, and Coleman; 10 deleted scenes; "Remembering Colin Higgins" featurette; gag reel; Singing "Nine to Five" karaoke feature; and the original theatrical trailer. The DVD is available separately in either widescreen or full-screen versions.

1980. Directed by openly gay Colin Higgins, who died in 1988.

Available April 4 from Fox Home Entertainment (www.foxhome.com). —Preview: Suzie Lynde

DVD/VHS PREVIEWS

Transgeneration



Everybody wants to be something when they grow up. Sometimes it's a different sex. The documentary series *Transgeneration* looks at a year in the lives of four college students undergoing the courageous and often difficult process of gender reassignment. Gabbie, Lucas, Raci, and T.J. juggle the challenges of academia with their commitment to transitioning from their birth sex. • 2005. Directed by openly gay Jeremy Simmons and executive produced by Fenton Bailey and Randy Barbato, the openly gay team who brought us *The Eyes of Tammy Faye* and *Party Monster*. • From Sundance Channel Home Entertainment (www.sundancechannel.com). —Preview: S.L.

Unveiled



Angelina Maccarone's political drama tells the story of Fariba Tabrizi (Jasmin Tabatabai, *Bandits*), a courageous Iranian woman, who, under threat of persecution for loving another woman, seeks political asylum in Germany and begins a life in exile under the assumed identity of a man. The political undercurrents of the film resonate with potent questions about gender, religion, and society. The DVD includes the short film *Everyone, Everywhere*, directed by Renée Rosenfeld and narrated by Sir Ian McKellan. • German, Persian, and English with English subtitles. 2005. Directed by Angelina Maccarone. • Available April 18 from Wolfe Video (www.wolfevideo.com or 1-800-GET-WOLFE). —Preview: S.L.

Dorian Blues



The "coming-out film" gets a beguiling makeover in *Dorian Blues*. The story follows with gentle humor and sprightly originality the travails of a misfit gay teen named Dorian Lagatos (Michael McMillian), who suffers through a never-ending series of absurdities. Filmmaker Tennyson Bardwell says, "Until I went to college I thought homosexuality was a myth. Then I met Brian Varga, who was openly gay. It was like this unicorn sitting across from me." Varga died of AIDS in 1991, and *Dorian Blues* is dedicated to his memory. • 2004. Written and directed by Tennyson Bardwell. • From TLA Releasing (www.tlareleasing.com). —Preview: Troy Carrington

Three of Hearts: A Postmodern Family



This critically acclaimed film tells the true story of Sam and Steven (Sam Cagnina and Steven Margolin), who enjoyed a loving relationship for years but decided to share their bed and marriage with a woman. When they decide to have a baby, things really begin to get interesting. Of course, you'll want to know about their families, their friends, and the sex. It's all here, including a family update. • 2004. Directed by Susan Kaplan. • From THINKFilm (www.thinkfilmcompany.com). —Preview: S.L.

FAQS



Set in the gritty streets of Los Angeles, *FAQS* (the opening credits deliberately interchange the Q with a G) is an impassioned indictment of the straight world and a tribute to queer youth, who create their own renegade family of support. Vigilante drag queen Destiny (Allan Louis) teaches her "rainbow children" to turn their hatred of straights into a defiant pride in themselves. • 2005. Written and directed by Everett Lewis. • From TLA Releasing (www.tlareleasing.com). —Preview: T.C.

Blackmail Boy



In a small Greek town, 20-year-old stud Christos (Yannis Tsimitselis) hops from bed to bed, including that of a city official, Yiorgos (Akilas Karazisis). Christos's brother-in-law concocts a blackmail scheme against Yiorgos, who holds the key to a plot of land belonging to Christos's family. *Blackmail Boy* is an

engaging tale of a dysfunctional family's desperate attempt to redeem themselves. • Greek with English and Spanish subtitles. 2003. Written and directed by Thanasis Papathanasiou and Michalis Reppas. • From Picture This! Entertainment (www.picturethisent.com). —Preview: T.C.

The Deadbeat Club



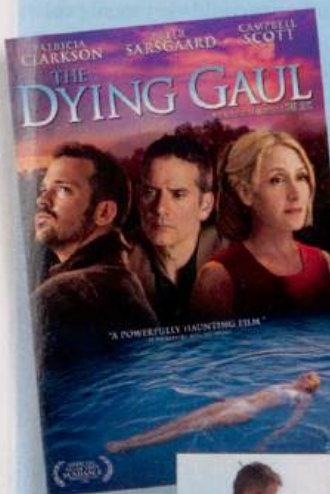
When a man loses his family in a fire, a small group of unpopular teens decide to hold a talent show to raise money to help him move. But troubles arise when no one signs up. In their search for talent, the teens find out how cruel people really are and how small-minded their town truly is when it comes to accepting those who are different. When Morgan (Brandon Dixon), a light-in-his-loafers kind of guy, gets accosted at a church revival meeting and has a "healing" forced upon him in order to "cast out the homosexual demons," it sets in motion his own personal search for his self-identity. • 2004. Directed by Israel Luna. • Available April 25 from Ariztical Entertainment (www.ariztical.com). —Preview: T.C.

The Judy Garland Show



"The Show that Got Away" continues with two new DVD releases—a total of four shows—that pair the legend with other legends, including Mel Tormé, Diahann Carroll, Jack Jones, Vic Damone, and others. Digitally remastered from the original videotapes, these classic hours with America's beloved icon continue the award-winning DVDs of Garland's TV series that aired in 1963 and 1964. • From Geneon Entertainment (www.geneon-ent.com). —Preview: T.C. ■

The Dying Gaul



Openly gay playwright Craig Lucas (*Light in the Piazza*, *Longtime Companion*) makes an audacious directorial debut with *The Dying Gaul*, a fiercely original psychological thriller based on his play of the same name. This tale of lust, power, corruption, betrayal, and revenge is part *Sunset Boulevard*, part Greek tragedy, set in the seductive world of the Hollywood elite. Starring Campbell Scott (*Roger Dodger*, *Longtime Companion*), Patricia Clarkson (*Far from Heaven*, TV's *Six Feet Under*), and Peter Sarsgaard (*Garden State*, *Kinsey*), *The Dying Gaul* is a post-modern Hollywood noir—unsettling, unpredictable, and morally explosive. • Robert Sandrich, a fledgling screenwriter (Sarsgaard), finds his life changed when he is offered a million dollars for his latest and most personal work, *The Dying Gaul*—a raw, autobiographical story of the death of his lover. Making the offer is Jeffrey (Scott), a smooth, ruthless, and sexually avaricious studio executive who seduces Robert with power, money, and sex. When Robert confides to Jeffrey's wife, Elaine (Clarkson), that he finds both sexual and emotional solace in the ghostlike world of chat rooms, the curious Elaine meets him there anonymously, with a dangerous series of deceptions, confessions, and betrayals to ensue. • 2005. Directed by Craig Lucas. • From Sony Pictures Home Entertainment (www.sonypictures.com). —Preview: T.C. ■

L-r: Campbell Scott, Peter Sarsgaard, and Patricia Clarkson

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ADAM & EVE?

No, it's *Adam & Steve*



Paradise: Gay actors Craig Chester (l) and Malcom Gets.

Don't let anybody spoil the surprise of Goth guy Adam's first hook-up with glam rock dancer Steve in the new romantic comedy *Adam & Steve*. The second somebody starts telling you about Adam & Steve's disastrous first date, smack 'em! It's so funny you'll want to experience it with surprise, then sit back and enjoy watching love grow when the fellas meet 17 years later, again instantly attracted to each other, but both unaware they had previously met.

Adam & Steve, written and directed by Craig Chester, who plays Adam, is the cute-as-a-button mating game of a not-quite-40 year-old, not-quite virgin Jewish boy in the Big Apple who falls for a handsome transplanted Texan (Malcolm Gets) who can't decide whether to continue having explosive, anonymous sex with random partners or surrender to "okay sex with someone on a regular basis" (the after-hours cowboy idea of commitment).

Indie film queen Parker Posey co-stars as Adam's obese gal pal comic Rhonda, newly



Parker Posey

svelte when the story fast-forwards to 2005. In Steve's corner is his nongay roommate Michael (comic Chris Kattan of *Saturday Night Live*). Whenever Adam & Steve hit a bump in their uneven boulevard to Better-Than-Ever Street, Rhonda and Michael lend support with barbed one-liners that complement the perceptively gay perspective of the amusing script.

One-time Oscar nominees Sally Kirkland and Melinda Dillon also appear, along with Julie Hagerty (*Airplane!*) as Adam's mother. Everyone in the cast conveys its creator's



Chris Kattan

candy-colored take on the pitfalls of men courting men in 21st-century New York City.

More than 10 songs highlight the comedy, including a toe-tapping number showcasing kicker dancing like you haven't seen since the Aggie football team celebrated at the Chicken Ranch in *The Best Little Whorehouse in Texas*.

Adam & Steve has it all, from hand-holding sweethearts whispering sweet nothings in a boyfriend's ear to jumping bones in a gym shower, from two-stepping to 12-stepping, from boy-meets-boy to boy-loses-boy to . . . any more scoop and I could hinder your chance to cherish this charmer created specifically for gay filmgoers. Just beware: Love is in the air. An audience could very easily catch spring fever and Cupid's arrow.

At press time, *Adam & Steve* was scheduled to have been showing at Angelika Film Center, 510 Texas Avenue, 713/225-1470, www.angelikafilmcenter/houston.com. For more on the film, go to www.adamandstevemovie.com.

—Review: Donalevan Maines

Kinky Boots

From the makers of *Calendar Girls* comes an uplifting British comedy about two outcast dreamers who finally figure out how to stand up for themselves . . . in thigh-high leather stilettos. Inspired by a surprising true story, *Kinky Boots* stars Joel Edgerton (*Star Wars: Episode III*) as Charlie Price, the young Englishman who inherits his father's failing shoe factory and, in a rousing comedic turn, Chiwetel Ejiofor (*Dirty Pretty Things*) as "Lola," the feisty female impersonator who turns Charlie's world, and the entire luckless factory, inside out and on its way to the catwalks of Milan. With a mix of brassy humor and heartwarming poignancy, *Kinky Boots* explores what happens when people who have spent their entire lives trying to fit in suddenly decide to truly stand out. At press time, *Kinky Boots* was scheduled to start April 28 at Landmark's River Oaks Theatre, 2009 West Gray, 713/866-8881, www.landmarktheatres.com. —Preview: Troy Carrington ■

These boots are made for modeling: Chiwetel Ejiofor (standing) and Joel Edgerton.



ADAM & STEVE PHOTOS: TLA/RELEASING; KINKY BOOTS: LAURIE SPARIAM AND MEGAN MAX FILMS

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CRUISIN' WITH ROSIE

Rosie O'Donnell's documentary about a cruise for gay families



Rosie O'Donnell surrounded by her loved ones—Kelli (far right) and their children.

A favorite at this year's Sundance Film Festival, *All Aboard! Rosie's Family Cruise* chronicles 2004's inaugural cruise for gay families, organized by R Family Vacations, the travel company founded by gay icon Rosie O'Donnell and her partner Kelli.

In the film's opening scene, as passengers board the massive Norwegian Dawn cruise ship (one of the world's largest) in New York, Kelli explains the reason for bringing gay families together for this adventure at sea: "I know that we're out searching for other gay families and we're one of the more prominent gay families in America—if I'm out searching, then everyone must be out searching."

The extremely polished and beautifully

shot film was directed by acclaimed filmmaker Shari Cookson, who in 2001 was nominated for an Emmy for *Living Dolls*, an HBO documentary about child beauty queens. Cookson's approach with *All Aboard!* was to capture the flavor of the historic voyage, while also looking deeper into the lives of some of the 500 unique families on board.

As the spectacular Norwegian Dawn makes its way to the Bahamas and back on this seven-day journey, we get to know families like that of Wayne Steinman and Sal Iacullo, a gay male couple who adopted a baby girl 17 years ago and now face empty-nest syndrome as their daughter Hope heads off to college. The men beam with pride and become emotional as she participates in a

panel discussion featuring kids who have grown up in gay families.

Lesbian couple Liz Ward, a cop, and Shauna Raye, a hair stylist, shed tears of joy when talking about life on the boat—feeling free to hold hands and kiss in public for the first time. Later, in the presence of their two children and Raye's mother, they marry in a sunset ceremony on the ship's deck.

The only ugly scenes in this celebratory film come when the ship docks in the port of Nassau in the Bahamas, only to be met by protesters from two small local churches. With signs like "We don't welcome sissies in the Bahamas," the rowdy bunch is mostly ignored by the gay travelers. Rosie chooses not to leave the ship, saying she probably would've "gone ballistic" and confronted the group.

If you are part of a gay family or want to be (some of the passengers came along just for the seminars on gay adoption, and one lesbian couple profiled in the film hooks up with a gay male couple willing to be "bio-dads"), this extraordinary documentary will make you desperate to go on the next cruise. (This summer's is an Alaskan cruise, July 2–9, and two more—to the Galapagos Islands and back to the Caribbean—are scheduled for November and February, respectively. Go to rfamilyvacations.com for more information.)

All Aboard! Rosie's Family Cruise debuts on HBO (www.hbo.com) April 6 from 7–8:30 p.m. Repeated airings: April 9 (3:30 p.m.), 12th (2:45 p.m.), 15th (11 a.m.), 18th (4 p.m.), and 24th (9:30 a.m. and 10 p.m.). HBO2 playdates: April 11 (8:30 a.m. and 8 p.m.) and 14th (1 p.m.). —Review: Bradley David Williams



Billie Jean King

TENNIS KING

Billie Jean King takes an in-depth look at King's rise as an international icon of women's equality, with the defining moment coming on September 20, 1973. On that day, King battled former men's Wimbledon champion Bobby Riggs in a match that King herself said would "ruin the women's tennis tour and affect all women's self-esteem" if she was not victorious. She defeated him, with an estimated 90 million television viewers witnessing the victory. As well as documenting King's on-court journey, *Billie Jean King* chronicles her life off the court. The documentary offers an intimate look at the private life of the tennis icon, including her bisexuality and the 1981 palimony suit filed by a female lover, her divorce from her husband, and the eating disorder that haunted her for many years. Debuts Wednesday, April 26, on HBO (www.hbo.com). —Preview: Suzie Lynde

NOT FULL OF BULL!

Penn & Teller, Showtime's resident iconoclasts, continue their onslaught on society's sacred cows with their critically acclaimed series, *Penn & Teller: Bullshit!* This award-winning series delivers viewers an aggressive, humorous exposé of taboo topics using the duo's trademark humor, knowledge of carnival tricks, as well as hidden cameras and blatant confrontation. This season's controversial topics include prostitution, the death penalty, cryptozoology, and—our favorite—the Boy Scouts. It might even top last season's "Family Values" episode. Debuts on Showtime on Monday, April 3, at 9 p.m. To confirm schedule and dates of repeat airings: www.sho.com. —Preview: Troy Carrington More TV →

O'DONNELL: R FAMILY VACATIONS; KING: MICHAEL COLE



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17TH ANNUAL GLAAD MEDIA AWARDS

Are you over award shows, especially after *Brokeback Mountain* lost the Oscar for best picture? Are you jonesin' for GLBT people and shows to win some awards? You're in luck! The 17th Annual GLAAD Media Awards is scheduled to air this month on Logo and VH1. *Brokeback Mountain*, *Capote*, and *Transamerica* are just a few of the nominated films; included in television nominations are *The L Word*, *Six Feet Under*, *Will & Grace*, *The Amazing Race*, and *General Hospital*; Melissa Etheridge and Antony and the Johnsons are music nominees; and



At last year's GLAAD awards, Felicity Huffman (l) and Marcia Cross of *Desperate Housewives*, who presented the award for outstanding drama series, surprised the audience with a lip-lock. We're hoping for a similar surprise this year.

a special award is being presented to Bright Eyes. And we're told that red-carpet interviews are part of the program, so we're on pins and needles waiting for Saturday, April 15, at 8 p.m. on Logo, with a repeat airing on VH1 on Sunday, April 16, at 10 p.m.

—Preview: Blase DiStefano

IT'S LIZA



WITH A "Z"

On a late spring night in 1972, Liza Minnelli took over New York's Lyceum Theater for what would be the performance of a lifetime. Alone on stage, guided by the masterful showmanship of the legendary Bob Fosse and captured with eight 16mm cameras by Academy Award-winning cinematographer Owen Roizman, Minnelli's tour-de-force performance became one of the most celebrated television specials of a generation. Now for the first time in over three decades, viewers will have the rare opportunity to experience this unforgettable event when Showtime, Minnelli, and award-winning producers Craig Zadan and Neil Meron present the fully restored and digitally remastered classic, *Liza with a "Z": A Concert for Television*, debuting exclusively on Showtime. The multiple Emmy Award-winning special, which was directed by the acclaimed *Cabaret* Oscar-winner Bob Fosse and starred Minnelli—who also received an Oscar for *Cabaret*—was broadcast by NBC three times: on September 10, 1972, March 9, 1973, and again in September, 1973. The one-hour special is quintessential Minnelli as she effortlessly moves from one musical genre to the next, delivering scintillating versions of such classics as "Yes," "God Bless the Child," "It Was a Good Time," "I Gotcha," "Ring Them Bells," "Son of a Preacher Man," "Bye, Bye Blackbird," "You've Let Yourself Go," "My Mammy," a *Cabaret* medley, along with the incomparable, tongue-twisting title song. Minnelli has teamed with openly gay producing duo Zadan and Meron (executive producers of the film *Chicago*, *Serving in Silence: The Margarette Cammermeyer Story*, the TV version of *Gypsy* with Bette Midler, TV's *It's All Relative*, and many more) to present this airing of the special for Showtime (www.sho.com), Saturday, April 1, at 8 p.m. Repeat airings on Showtime Too: April 2, 8 p.m.; 10th, 7 p.m.; 13th, 5 p.m.; and 17th, 11 p.m. The DVD is available from Showtime Entertainment. —Preview: T.C.

LIZA WITH YOUR EARS

The *Liza with a "Z"* soundtrack was Liza Minnelli's first for Columbia Records, upon her signing by music legend Clive Davis. The album was awarded a Gold Record and spent 23 weeks on the Top 40 charts, debuting on September 30, 1972. It reached number 19 on Billboard's charts and has never gone out of print. This new CD presents the soundtrack as it was originally performed on May 31, 1972, at New York's Lyceum Theater. From Columbia/Legacy (www.columbiarecords.com, www.legacyrecordings.com). —Preview: T.C. ■



HUFFMAN/CROSS - GLAAD; MINNELLI - SHOWTIME

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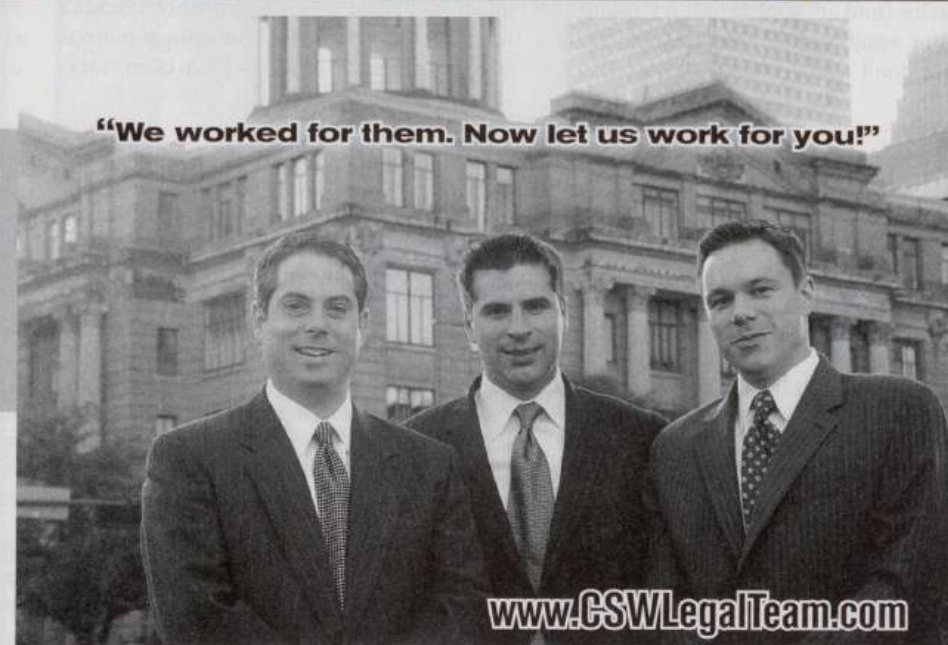
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DIFFERENTLY LABELED

The new Sony-backed Twist label prompts a look at some queer indy music

In early January of 2006 the queer music world was in a tizzy over the announcement that Sony Music, in conjunction with Logo television network founder Matt Farber, was launching a record label for queer artists under the moniker Music With a Twist. This is not the first foray by a major label into that territory. Anybody old enough to recall Atlantic Records' roster in the mid-1990s might remember that it was home to out artists such as Jill Sobule, Melissa Ferrick, and Extra Fancy. Around the same time, Sony also launched the short-lived Pink Tank—perhaps less a label than a gay marketing brain trust.

Fast forward 10 years, give or take, with gay sitcoms and other TV series, gay cable networks, and gay films all the rage in Hollywood, why not pay a little more attention to gay musicians?

After all, coming out didn't really hurt Elton John, k.d. lang, Melissa Etheridge, the Indigo Girls, or Rufus Wainwright, among others, did it?

As someone who has been writing about music, and queer music in particular, for a dozen years, I have heard my share of worthy (and unworthy) music released on major, smaller, and independent labels. While I don't see the point of say, Elton,



Levi Kreis



One of the Ones Levi Kreis

k.d. (see the preview of her new compilation, *Reinternation*, below), Melissa, Amy, Emily, or Rufus joining the ranks of a specifically queer-identified label, it probably wouldn't hurt. On the other hand, there are numerous indy queer musicians who have been work-

ing hard, building up their followings, and recording and releasing albums, many of which surpass their major-label brothers and sisters (see Brady Earnhart). What follows is a rundown of recent releases by independent queer artists who could actually benefit from a little major label attention (read financial support).

• **Levi Kreis**—who performed in Houston last month at Guava Lamp with fellow indy Eric Himan (see page 96)—could be this year's poster child for queer male musicians. Easy on the eyes, Kreis appears to be ready-made for those in the visual packaging department. With a voice that sounds like he just finished taking his bows in the Broadway production of just about any recent musical, Kreis should have no trouble reeling in listeners. On *One of the Ones* (levikreis.com), he also accompanies himself on piano and writes (or co-writes) catchy pop tunes, the best of which include "I Should Go," "With You," "Hardly a Hero," and "Just This Good," on *One of the Ones* (Tango Blues).

• **Cindy Bullens** has already done her time on major labels. Before she was out, Bullens released albums on Casablanca and United Artists in the late '70s, and when she made her comeback in the late '90s, she recorded for Artemis. Her new album, *Dream #29* (Let's Play/Blue Lobster), featuring Elton John (for whom she sang backing vocals →

GrooveOut Shorts

k.d. lang
Reinternation



Canada's original "cowpunk" singer, k.d. lang, revisits her early country roots as a more rambunctious, Patsy Cline-loving, wedding dress-sportin' hillbilly songstress. The 20-song collection features rare early singles as well as one unreleased track "Changed My Mind." Long before she came out as a lesbian, before the gender-bending hairstyle and clothes, and long before she appeared on the cover of *Vanity Fair* lounging in a barber's chair in male drag, fans were drawn to that achingly beautiful voice and her intensely romantic singing style. The album spotlights the first decade of her recording career when she broke ground as a one-of-a-kind country singer. Available April 25 from Rhino (www.rhino.com). More info: www.kdlang.com. —Preview: Andrea Rodricks

World Premiere Recording
Songs from an Unmade Bed



In *Songs from an Unmade Bed*, one lyricist and 18 composers come together to create an innovative musical song cycle centering on a tale of modern-day urban romance and heartache. With Michael Winther as a smart, resilient, wry, and ultimately optimistic gay New Yorker, *Songs from an Unmade Bed* journeys through the pitfalls and triumphs of love in the big city. From Ghostlight/Sh-K-Boom Records (www.ghostlightrecords.com, www.sh-k-boom.com). —Preview: Troy Carrington

Erasure
Union Street

If you didn't know better, you'd think this was a completely new Erasure album. And in a lot of ways, it is. What the boys have done is to take a scattered collection of songs from their past (but not hits) and translate them into acoustic songs. It has uncovered layers to the songs that

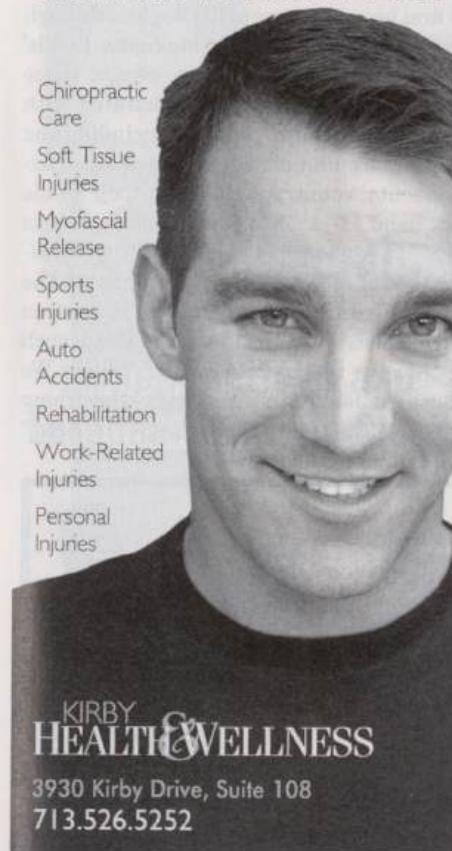


Jimmy James
Fashionista

Pursuing his dream of recording dance music, singer and performer Jimmy James used Andre Leon Talley, editor at large of *Vogue NY*, as his muse to write his new single "Fashionista." The song is full of catchphrases synonymous with the fashion industry, →

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Cindy Bullens

a number of years ago) on the title track, has a blues-pop attitude, best realized on "Jellico Highway," "Box of Broken Hearts," "Mockingbird Hill," and "Too Close to the Sun," and deserves to be heard by the wider audience a major label practically guarantees.

Like Bullens, **Rick Berlin** had a taste of the major-label spotlight when, as a member of Orchestra Luna, he was signed to Epic in the '70s, and in 1982, his Boston-based band Berlin Airlift's full-length debut album was released on the CBS-distributed Handshake Records. In the years that followed, Berlin worked in various musical incarnations, and on *Me & Van Gogh* (Hi-N-Dry), he goes it alone, with just his voice and a piano. The openly gay Berlin is at turns dramatic (the title track, "Criminal"), theatrical ("The Ride," "A Letter," "Beerbelly"), reminiscent of Jimmy Webb ("Party Dress," "Do You Still Love Me?"), and never less than completely original and inspiring.

The recipient of a multitude of awards, including the 2005 Outmusic Award for outstanding songwriter, **Rachael Sage** hit her stride with her 2004 *Ballads & Burlesque*. She continues that streak on *The Blistering Sun* (MPress), expanding her keyboards and vocal-driven sound with the inclusion of a horn section ("Al-right, OK," "Wildflower," "Lonely Street"), an accordion (the character song "93 Maidens"), some wah-wah guitar (on the soulful "Violet or Blue"), strings ("Paperplane"), as well as a return to Ani DiFranco-like spoken word ("Hit Song"). Known for her colorful stage

persona, Sage has appeal that is practically limitless.

I first became aware of LD Beghtol through his performances on the Magnetic Fields' 1999 magnum opus, *69 Love Songs*. Since that time, I have become acquainted with LD's other musical projects, including the bands Flare and moth wranglers. The "experimental countrypolitan deathpop" of his new band **LD & The New Criticism** brings all of his influences to bear on *Tragic Realism* (Darla). Fans, gay and straight, of The Arcade Fire are almost certain to be smitten by this disc, which includes standouts such as "Always the Last to Know," "When We Dance (At Joe Orton's Wedding)," "Laughing at You," "Too Old to Die Young," "In Blue," and "Unpaid Endorsement." →



LD & The New Criticism

GrooveOut Shorts continued from page 92



including "Fashion is the art! Designers are the gods!" plus a "Fashion Wrap," a laundry list of designers' names. From Made Records (www.beatport.com/Made+Records). —Review: T.C.

Etta James

All the Way



To our good fortune, legendary vocalist Etta James is still going strong. Her latest CD is far removed from the gritty, bluesy R&B she is best known for. *All the Way* offers renditions of John Lennon's "Imagine," Prince's "Purple Rain," Simply Red's "Holding Back the Years," and Marvin Gaye's "What's Going On." With a voice that still conveys passion and pain, James demonstrates her fluency with late 20th-century pop, adding her own special touch and making each song sound like a standard written solely for her. From Advance Music (www.advancemusic.com). More info: www.etta-james.com. —Review: A.R.

Sia

Colour the Small One

Australian-born singer Sia Kate Isobelle Furler has got it



nailed. She has a smoky, sexy voice that haunts like wolves, she pens songs that fit that tone perfectly, and she's now proven that she can bounce back from a wicked career drop-off (which happened after her explosive debut in 2000). Six years later, she takes the Stone Roses approach (infamous for taking generational gaps between albums) and comes back with a collection of morose but beautiful songs that alternate between brooding and shining. Her songs have a way of creeping you out during the verses and then flipping on all the lights during the choruses, most notably in "Sunday," where you always want her growling during the verse to end—mostly just so you can get right to the chorus. From Astralwerks (www.astralwerks.com). —Review: L.S.W.

Bird York

Wicked Little High



Described as "torch trip-hop" by Music Biz, Bird York's major-label debut features her Academy Award-nominated song, "Into the Deep." Paul Haggis, Crash's Oscar-winning writer and director, says, "Bird is a brilliant singer-songwriter. Her songs are like ground glass in honey; and even after you know that, she just keeps tempting you until you swallow. I'm an addict." From Narada (www.narada.com). More info:

www.birdyork.com. —Review: Suzie Lynde
Editor's note: For an interview with the gay-friendly singer, go to www.outsmartmagazine.com.

Various Artists

The Tommy Boy Story, Vol. 1

Journey into Paradise... The Larry Levan Story



Hip hop would still exist without Tommy Boy Records, but it wouldn't be the same. Rhino recognizes that, assembling this collection of bright spots from the label's early days (1980-92) and issuing a companion collection of remixes by old schooler DJ Larry Levan. While Levan's disc is a series of remixes of club hits, *Story* is composed of all original tracks—everything from early Afrika Bambaataa to... Information Society? Might sound odd for one label to release a collection of stuff entirely representing another label, but Rhino is as Rhino does. Available April 11 from Rhino (www.rhino.com). —Review: L.S.W.

Goldfrapp

Supernature

Through pioneering electronics, crystalline vocals, visual theatrics, and dark-sex decadence, Goldfrapp have moved through the ambient shadows into the Technicolor dream that is the hallmark of classic British pop music. The new album, *Supernature*, is the →

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GrooveOut continued from page 94

• Queer trio **Grizzly Bear** does the neo-folk genre (see Devendra Banhart, Sufjan Stevens) proud on *Horn of Plenty* (Kanine). The influence of early Liz Phair is also deeply felt throughout. The expanded reissue of this 2004 release now comes with a bonus disc of remixes by out remixers such as Soft Pink Truth and others.

• Speaking of Liz Phair, *Sweet Chastity* (Luv-a-lot) by **Dan Fishback** (also of Cheese on Bread) is an homage to the brazen singer/songwriter. From the cover photo, a nod to her self-titled 2003 disc, to the haunting piano of "Piano Song," to the sexual exploits of "Silent Tea," to the breathy "The News Today," to the guitar on "Bad Canary" (as well as the Phair name-check), you could call it "Exile in Gayville." The disc also retains the spirit of Fishback's Cheese on Bread work on other tracks.

• Queer hip-hop artists, from **Scott Free** to **Tori Fixx** to **God-dess** and many others in between, are creating some of the fiercest and most original rhymes you are likely to hear. On *The Lemonade Incident* (socetew.com), **Soce The Elemental Wizard** wastes no time in getting down to business on the opening track "I Am (So Gay)," where he



Billy Porter

rap, "I am the gayest MC on the planet/I got more men than Janet." With what follows, including "Bad Hair Day," "Selling Out," and "Same Three Spots," I gladly take him at his word.

• These days if you turn on Logo (well, if you have satellite service in our area, you can), you are likely to see **Billy Porter**. The openly gay singer/songwriter shares his coming-out story in one of the network's promos. It's easy to imagine a voice and talent as big as Porter's getting lost in a recording studio. So it's logical that he would want to record a live album as he did with *At the Corner of Broadway & Soul* (Sh-K-Boom). In addition to more than a half dozen original co-compositions, Porter unleashes his powerful pipes on songs by Stephen Sondheim, Ricky Ian Gordon, Adam Guettel, and Jason Robert Brown. He also includes roof-raising reading of Tom Egan and Henry Kreiger's "And I'm Telling You I'm Not Going" (from *Dreamgirls*).

• It's not fair to judge **Eric Himan**'s talent based on *One Night Stands...* (Thumb Crown), his new live album. The sound quality is surprisingly poor, which is an issue when it comes to a live recording. Diehard Himan-heads will want the album, however, for the two previously unreleased live numbers, "In My Shoes" and "Let It In," and "Bartender," a previously unavailable studio track.

• Out guitarist **Mimi Fox**, who can be heard alongside other lesbian guitarists, including Patty Larkin and Kaki King, on *La Guitarra*, has returned with her own album, the double disc set *Perpetually Hip* (Favored Nations). Both discs include Fox's interpretations of jazz and American songbook standards. On the first disc, she performs with Harvie S., Billy Hart, and Xavier Davis, and she goes it alone on the second disc.

Space doesn't allow for more details about additional noteworthy independent queer artists, but does permit me to mention *The Color and the Light* (Red Panda) by **Jennifer O'Connor**, *Lullaby for a Junkie* (andymullen-music.com) by **Andy Mullen and the Shape-shifters**, *Black Doves* (Funzalo) by **Amelia White**, *The Other Side* (Cornerworld) by **Lou**, *Trouble from the Start* (Machine Heart) by **Lisa Moscatiello**, *Frolic & F**** (Bully) by **Ariel Aparicio w/The Hired Guns**, *Dig Right In* (playinout.com) by **Andy Moore**, *Denying the West* (Johann's Face) by **Das Kapital** (featuring former members of The Atari Star), *Parody of Pleasure* (threedollarbill.net) by **Three Dollar Bill**, the self-titled EP by **Lisa Jackson + girl Friday** (lisajacksonandgirlfriday.com), and *Barre Handed* (barreparts.com) by **Tony Barre**.

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

contained, like a little old lady or a young boy who just can't get the volume up. Might be the accent, might be the long legs and white blonde hair, but it's definitely the thing that's drawing people to them. From New Line (www.newlinerecords.com). —Review: L.S.W.

World Premiere Recording *See What I Wanna See*



This new musical moves from a mysterious murder in Central Park to the miracle of a devastated city's rebirth, chronicling New York stories of faith, loss, and redemption. With a lush, contemporary score, *See What I Wanna See* takes inspiration from the stories of Ryunosuke Akutagawa and features Tony-winner Idina Menzel (*Rent* [Broadway and film], *Wicked*) and Tony nominees Marc Kudisch, Mary Testa, Aaron Lohr, and Henry Stram. From Ghostlight/Sh-K-Boom Records (www.ghostlightrecords.com, www.sh-k-boom.com). —Preview: T.C.

Radney Foster *This World We Live In*



Texas singer/songwriter Radney Foster continues to take chances. Introspective yet freewheeling, *This World We Live In* combines Foster's gift for literate songwriting with the rough-and-tumble sound of a man who's done battle with the complexities of life. His songs marry pop smarts and roots credibility with a profound insight into the human condition. From Dualtone Music Group (www.dualtone.com). —Preview: T.C. ■

GrooveOut Shorts continued from page 94



sound of Goldfrapp breaking through their own crash barrier—a strident, psychedelic, uncompromising creative force at the top of their own game. From Mute (www.mute.com). More info: www.goldfrapp.co.uk. —Preview: S.L.

Beth Orton *Comfort of Strangers*



Comfort of Strangers is a collection of tracks filled with bittersweet sophistication. Orton's fascination with music of all kinds is evident in her impatient imagination, the headlong desire to embark on new ideas and fresh partnerships, and her refreshing originality shines through on tracks like "Conceived" and the colorful opener, "Worms." From Astralwerks (www.astralwerks.com). —Preview: S.L.

The Sounds *Dying to Say This to You*



Musically, this is more hijacked post punk. Sonically, it's totally flat. Songwriting-wise, it borrows from the poppiest elements of '80s dance tunes to the point of almost being boy-band material. The real standout with this band of Swedes, and the thing that might make their formula long-lasting, is lead singer Maja Ivarsson. Her voice is all at once aggro and yet

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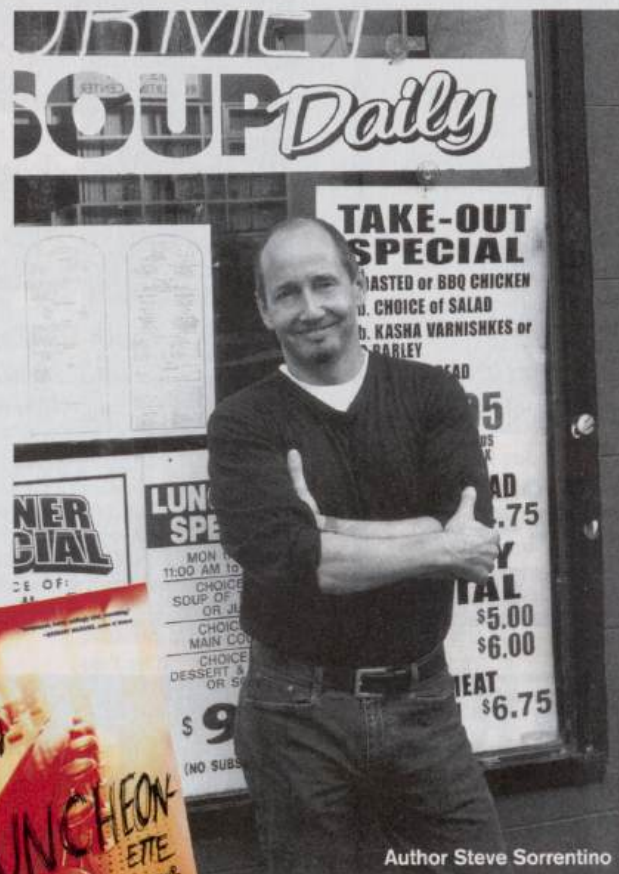
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FAMILY BUSINESS

A new memoir looks at a gay caregiver's lonely road

What a guy Steven Sorrentino is. The role of caregiver to aging parents often falls on gay children whose siblings cite their own families as the reason the gay child is best situated to move home and heed the call of family duty. In Sorrentino's case, he was only 24 when his father's stroke on Christmas Eve 1980 stalled his tentative steps out of the closet with dreams of finding love and stardom on Broadway. He had barely begun to sow his wild oats, and to try and make good on the promise he had shown as Tevye in a high school production of *Fiddler on the Roof*, much less to discover the gay man inside of him in all its potent courage and glory.

Luncheonette: A Memoir (ReganBooks, a division of HarperCollins) is Sorrentino's valentine to his dad, who bounces back to embrace his new life in a wheelchair while Sorrentino takes over his luncheonette in their small hometown of West Long Branch, New Jersey. Sorrentino sublimates his own yearnings to hold things together ("If I couldn't save the man, maybe I could save his luncheonette," he reasons). After all, this angel of a man is the guy who taught Sorrentino an appreciation for old-school Broadway musicals and gave him permission and encouragement to follow his dreams.



Author Steve Sorrentino

The neighborhood eatery boasts a frustrating menu of local eccentricities, and the claustrophobic universe of porkroll-egg-and-cheese sandwiches (a New Jersey staple my boss in Manhattan calls a "hungryman") comes across all too vividly to the reader. While Sorrentino paints his father as a god among men, he smears the cast of caricatures at the luncheonette as

hellions beyond relief. By the time our narrator starts thinking about suicide, it almost seems like a reasonable solution. Not only has he left behind a hungry would-be friend and lover in New York, but the closest thing to romance he finds in West Long Branch is the unrequited lust for a Neanderthal delivery man that he shares with a widowed waitress who picks up on her boss's attraction to men. Even when Sorrentino dares to visit a gay bar not far away, who should he hook up with but a married man more interested in his wife and kids than building a life with Sorrentino. This fella can't win for losing.

Ultimately, the nightmare ends with our hero returning to New York City with lessons learned from the luncheonette and, more importantly, a big lesson learned from his father—basically that when life hands you eggs, you make an omelette, not your father's porkroll-egg-and-cheese sandwich.

Sorrentino discovers that "true wisdom is parceled out into short orders, coming from the most surprising places, at the most unexpected times." For him, the journey to that revelation was stultifying, but perhaps his book will show readers that it's crucial to balance family loyalty with the pursuit of one's own happiness.

Donalevan Maines reviewed *Yesterday Will Make You Cry* (W.W. Norton) in *OutSmart's* February issue.

ReadOut Shorts

Sour Puss

by Rita Mae Brown & Sneaky Pie Brown
Bantam Books Hardcover (www.randomhouse.com)



Halleluiah, the gang is back! Enter the world of Crozet, where everyone sees the humor in animal antics at their person's wedding. Town favorites Harry and Fair's newly wedded bliss is interrupted when a prominent visitor's corpse is found in a local field. Harry's animal companions

(Mrs. Murphy, Pewter, Tucker, and their wild friends) let the poor, senseless humans think they solved the crime. As always, this Mrs. Murphy mystery is among the very best of the cozy cat genre. Set against the backdrop of Virginia's emerging wine industry, *Sour Puss* is a delightful way to spend an afternoon with old friends. —Review: Angel Curtis

The Days of Good Looks

by Cheryl Clarke

Carroll & Graf (www.carrollandgraf.com)

Cheryl Clarke is one of the few chroniclers of my times



who always tells the truth. A leading thinker in the black, feminist, and lesbian movements, Clarke's essays inflamed the mind as her poetry set hearts afire. This new volume has it all—Clarke's previous poetry (long out of print), her inspired essays (difficult to find), and her first new poetry in 10 years. *The Days of Good Looks* continues to tell the truth, reminds me of all we went through, and makes it very clear that "older" doesn't mean out of the game. This one is a must read. —Review: A.C. ■

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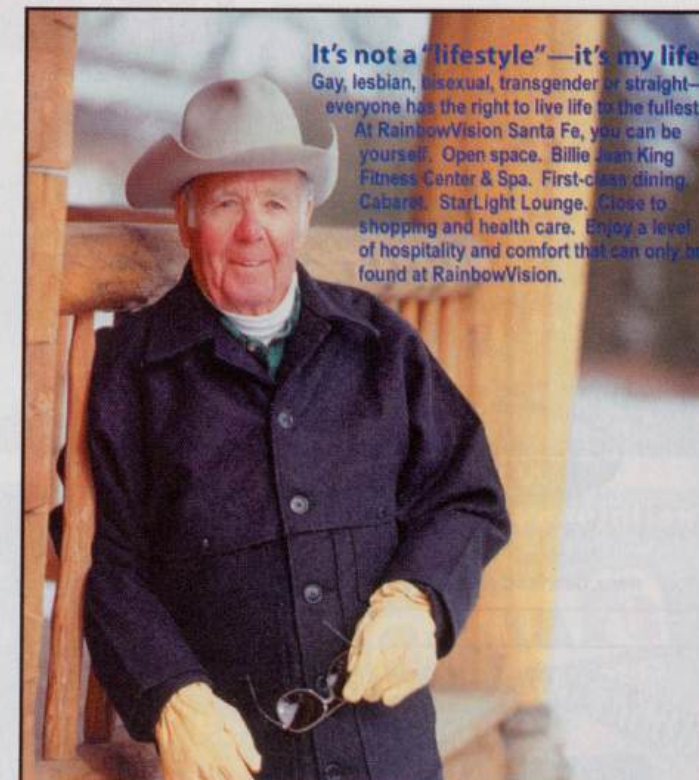


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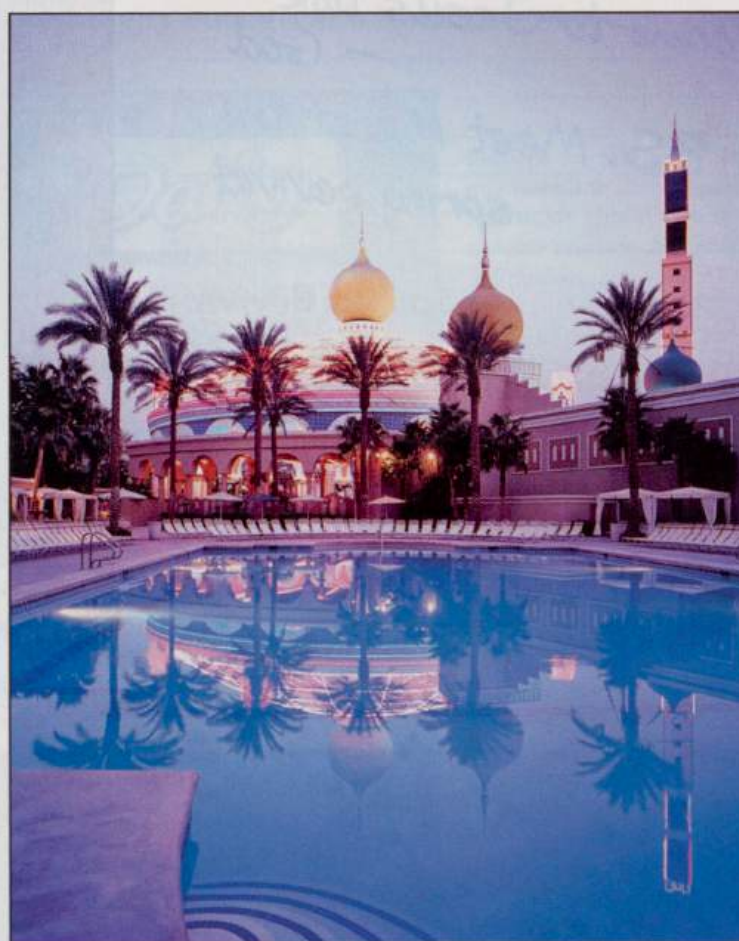
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Out of Town

by Victor Zorn

DIVA LAS VEGAS

The annual transgender holiday week in Sin City turns 10



Grand hotel: The pool at the Sahara, one of the suggested hotels for the Diva Las Vegas week.

Ten years ago, a group of transgender friends began meeting for a vacation in Las Vegas. Over a decade, their annual retreat, known as Diva Las Vegas, has developed into a busy week that attracts trans vacationers from across the country. The 10th anniversary edition of Diva Las Vegas is April 17 through April 23.

The array of Diva Las Vegas activities includes a high English tea, Vegas shows, a Death Valley day trip, a Lake Mead boat excursion, a renewal of wedding vows, and lots of shopping. "Of all, the limo ride is my favorite," says Nora Linda, a member of the organizing committee and the Theta Upsilon Gamma chapter of Tri-Ess. "We have approximately six stretch limos, which go to six of the major hotels in Las Vegas. You can imagine the reaction (all positive) as we pull up at the height of the evening to each hotel with the tourists reacting by insisting on posing with us. We are probably the highlight

of their vacation and at the same time make a positive presentation for us. Last year one of the tourists confided that he was one of us, although deep in the closet."

One of the main events for the week is the Diva Las Vegas Invitational, billed by the organizers as "the first regularly scheduled transgender golf tournament in recorded history." The site for the 18-hole event is the public Desert Rose Golf Course.

Las Vegas divas make their own travel arrangements. Suggested hotels are Imperial Palace Hotel & Casino (www.imperialpalace.com), Monte Carlo Resort & Casino, and Sahara Hotel & Casino (www.saharavegas.com). The extensive Diva Las Vegas website (www.geekbabe.com/dlv) offers excellent recommendations, travel tips, and advisories. Check it out: Most of these are great for any GLBT traveler to Vegas.

Victor Zorn reported on the new adventure travel firm Out on the Water in our December issue.

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TO TELL THE TRUTH

All lesbian weddings aren't good ones, Sally allows

What're we gonna do about Jo and Amy's wedding?" My co-worker Laura flicked the pink memo slip for effect. "They left another message."

"Oh, God." I extracted the invitation from my desk drawer. "It says RSVP by today."

Laura and I had met the brides-to-be during our lunch hour only a few weeks before. We had walked into the café across the street from our office, and there, at our favorite table, sat two spiky-haired hotties in tight muscle shirts. Fabric swatches, seating charts, and cake photos littered the green Formica. Wedding plans! What could we do but introduce ourselves?

These babydykes had just transferred to the local university. We welcomed them to town, clued them in on the bar scene and the women's bookstore—even gave them our business cards.

Turns out they had been together all of three months. I couldn't imagine they would make it much longer. They were young. Too young to get married, I thought, and didn't seem compatible. Naturally, I didn't say so. I'm funny that way—willing to lobby my legislators, march on Washington, and speak to the rallying throngs, but I wilt at the prospect of personal confrontation.

Jo and Amy offered to share their table, and Laura and I accepted—a move I immediately regretted. The soon-to-be-wed twosomes were testy, zinged each other with put-downs, and squabbled over whether the drag queen bridesmaid outfits would coordinate with the wedding gowns. (Red sequins and black boas will clash with our antique ivory lace. Will not. Will so. What do you know? Bite me!)

Lacking the temperament to share a

piece of my mind, I made a polite excuse, and Laura and I dashed out of the café. The next day the invitation arrived with the office mail. I wished I'd had the ovaries to tell the gals I thought they were making a mistake. Neither Laura nor I wanted to go to the wedding, but I felt obligated to at least consider it. You know how it goes—lesbian solidarity, intergenerational responsibility, general cowardice.

Here we were, weeks later, up against the RSVP deadline, and we couldn't stall any longer. One of us would have to do the deed. I was too chicken.

Laura picked up the phone and punched in the number. By her smile I could tell she'd reached a machine.

"Hello, you two. Thanks for inviting us." Laura's professional tone was much cleaner than I could have pulled off. "Unfortunately,

Sally and I won't be joining you. Hope all goes well." She held out the phone like it had crotchies and dropped it into its cradle.

The pressure off, I woo-hoo'd and tossed the crumpled invitation into the recycle bin.

"Jeez, what idiots!" Laura's socially responsible courtesy gave way like a brittle dental dam. "What the hell are they doing getting married? Are they crazy? They don't even like each other. I've seen more maturity in a zygote. Those jerks!"

She ranted on like that for a good five minutes.

"They're making a mockery of all we're fighting for. I wouldn't be caught dead at that wedding."

A few minutes before quitting time, a call came in on line 2. It was Jo, saying she had received a weird message from Laura and wanted to know if there had been some mistake. I put her on hold and walked over to Laura's desk.

The phone receiver lay right where it fell, settled at a slight angle—just crooked enough to remain off the hook. Jo and Amy's answering machine had kept recording—everything.

Over the years, I've endured many mortifying moments, which I try not to rehash. At that moment they all flooded back to me—the teacher intercepting my anonymous love note to another girl, discovering a pubic hair between my teeth at the end of a job interview, my Hitachi magic wand setting off the airport security buzzer. When I'm utterly busted and exposed, I wish for anything to get me out of there—a massive earthquake, spontaneous vaporization, the Rapture. When no escape materializes, I go catatonic, face the music through the fog of my shame, and try my best to forget.

Here I had Laura, the master of the unabashed, to role-model simply fessing up and moving on.

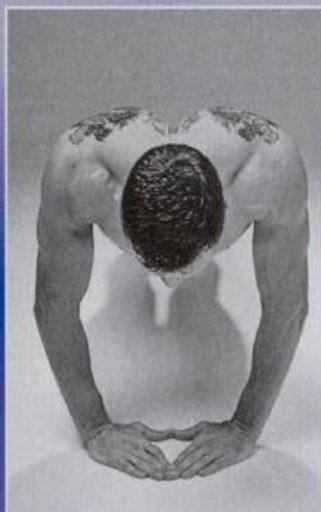
"Hi, it's me," Laura told the receiver. "No, no mistake. It's one of those things you hope will never happen, but you caught me. OK, then. Good-bye."

She didn't even wish them good luck, although I doubt it would have helped. It wasn't long before we heard through the grapevine that Jo and Amy split up six weeks after their wedding and left town in opposite directions, each with her new sweetie. Luckily the drag queens salvaged the sequins and boas.

Sheklow, who received both first- and second-place honors in the magazine column category in the 2005 Houston Press Club Lone Star Awards, declines ill-fated wedding invitations in Eugene, Oregon. She contributes a regular segment, "That Time of the Month," to the Air America radio affiliate in Eugene.

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Calendar of Events

Deadline for OutSmart's May issue is 5 p.m., Monday, April 10.

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 (Sun.-Fri.)

HIV Testing. The Montrose Clinic offers free confidential HIV testing at these locations: **Decades**, 1205 Richmond, 713/521-2224, Mon. 6-10pm (Dennis); **EJ's**, 2517 Ralph, 713/527-9071, Wed. & Fri. 10pm-1am (Rhonda & Lourdes); **Mary's, Naturally**, 1022 Westheimer, 713/527-9669, Wed. 4-8pm (Jack); **Midtown Spa**, 3100 Fannin, 713/522-2379, Tues. 9pm-1am (Carlos), Wed. 10pm-1am (Juan), Fri. 10pm-1am (Quincy); **Ripcord**, 715 Fairview, 713/521-2792, Wed. 9pm-12am (Matthew); **Inergy/Mango Lounge**, 5750 Chimney Rock, 713/660-7310, Mon. 9pm-12am (Carlos); **1415 Bar & Grill**, 1415 California, 713/522-7066, Thurs. 9pm-12am (Carlos); **611 Hyde Park Pub**, 611 Hyde Park, 713/526-7070, Tues. 3-7pm & Sun. 2-6pm (Matthew); **All Star News and Video Emporium**, 3415 Katy Freeway

& Studewood, 713/869-7878, Mon. & Thurs. 4-8pm (Jack); **Brazos River Bottom**, 2400 Brazos, 713/528-9192, Thurs. 8pm-12am (Matthew); **Cousin's**, 817 Fairview, 713/528-9204, Thurs. 8pm-12am (Jack); **Club Houston**, 2205 Fannin, 713/659-4998, Tues. 8pm-12am (Dennis). For more info: 713/830-3000.

Daily (Sun.-Fri.)

HIV Testing. Planned Parenthood offers free anonymous or confidential testing at clinic locations throughout the area. To speak with an HIV counselor: 1-800-230-PLAN, Dickinson: 281/337-7725, Fannin: 713/831-6543, FM1960: 281/587-8081, Greenspoint: 281/445-4553, Huntsville: 936/295-6396, Lufkin: 936/634-8446 x223, Rosenberg: 281/342-3950, Stafford: 281/494-9848.

Weekly (Saturdays)

Saving Animals partners with the City of Houston to save loving, adoptable animals from the pound and find them permanent homes. Adoptions take place at Northwest Mall every Saturday from 10:30-4:30 near entrance B. Information or to volunteer: 713/527-4490 or www.savinganimals.org.

Weekly (Thursdays)

Lenten Soup. The annual Lenten Concert Series at St. Paul's United Methodist Church features a wide variety of musicians. Each of the weekly concerts will

be in the church's sanctuary, Thursdays at 12:15 pm throughout Lent at St. Paul's United Methodist Church, 5501 Main, at the corner of Main and Binz/Bissonnet, across from the Museum of Fine Arts.

Monthly (Tues.)

The Houston SPCA Pet Loss Support Group provides a professionally facilitated, supportive, and safe environment for people to grieve the loss of a beloved companion. Free, First Tuesday of every month, 7 pm, at the Houston SPCA, 900 Portway Dr. Info: 713/869-7722, ext. 127, or www.houstonspca.org.

4 (Tues.)

The Chamber. The Greater Houston GLBT Chamber of Commerce's dinner meeting, 6:30-9 pm. For more info: www.TheChamberHouston.com or 713/523-7576, Next meeting: Thurs., May 4.

4-9 (Tues.-Sun.)

Something Smells Fishy. Tony-nominated Joe Sears and Jaston Williams return to Tuna, Texas, "the third smallest town in Texas," with *Red, White, and Tuna*. Sears and Williams create all 20 citizens of Tuna to celebrate the Fourth of July and the Tuna High School Reunion. At Galveston's Grand 1894 Opera House, 2020 Postoffice St. Showtimes and reservations: 409/765-1894, 800/821-1894, or www.thegrand.com.

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. 10.

6 (Thurs.)

Raw. Steak Tar Tare II, a raw-meat extravaganza, features rare entertainment by Hope Stone Dance with well-done tuneage spun by DJ Sun. Hors d'oeuvres donated by Backstreet Café. (But will they be cooked?) 7-9 pm at Sloan Hall, River Oaks Shopping Center, 2620 Westheimer at Kirby. RSVP: 713/526-1907, ext. 1.

7 (Fri.)

Ball's Out. The Houston Symphony League and Houston Symphony Society present The Old World Symphony Ball, a black-tie affair that includes a silent auction, music by Virtuosi of Houston and the Richard Brown Orchestra, and delicious fare provided by Hilton Americas-Houston. The event benefits the Houston Symphony's musical

education and outreach programs that have touched the lives of thousands of area students. Tickets start at \$500, tables range from \$5,000-\$50,000. 7 pm at Hilton Americas-Houston, 1600 Lamar. Information: 713-344-5619.

8 (Sat.)

Raise your Hipness Quotient. Da Camera of Houston presents *Get Hip!*, an entertaining, interactive introduction to jazz. The program, performed by the Metta Quintet, also promotes community interaction, cooperation, teamwork, and self-expression. Free, 11 am at Miller Outdoor Theatre's Side Stage, 100 Concert Drive. Information: 713/524-5050 or www.dacamera.com.

8 & 9 (Sat. & Sun.)

The 59th Semi-Annual Houston Camera Show and Sale. Say cheeeeee! And save some cheddar on new, used, and vintage cameras of every style imaginable. From ol' timey Brownies to the latest digital SLRs, there's a toy for every shutterbug, usually at negotiable prices, or for trade-in deals. \$6 each day, 10 am-5 pm Sat., 10 am-4 pm Sun., at the Marriott Hotel-Hobby Airport, 9100 Gulf Fwy at the Airport exit. Info/table reservations: 713/868-9606.

19-23 (Wed.-Sun.)

Dig those MPEGs. Aurora Picture Show presents the third annual *Media Archaeology: Software Cinema*. Featuring live audio-visual events at five Houston arts venues, the festival highlights artists who use found electronic media to produce interactive screenings. Venues include Aurora Picture Show, Barnevelter Movement/Arts Complex, DiverseWorks, Domy, and The Orange Show Center for Visionary Art. Dates and times: 713/868-2101 or www.aurorapictureshow.org.

21 (Fri.)

A Bo Derek Gala? Opera in the Heights celebrates its 10th anniversary season with "Perfect 10," an exciting evening honoring five founding board members and five Houston universities whose students and faculty have appeared on the OH stage over the past decade. Five plus five equals a perfect "10," get it? Individual tickets begin at \$200; table sponsorships are \$3000 and up. 7-11 pm at Hotel Derek, 2525 West Loop South. Reservations, information, and viewing of auction items: 713/861-5303 or www.operaintheheights.org.

21 & 22 (Fri. & Sat.)

La Resistance Lives On. Danielle Brazelle's performance art piece *Battalion: Acts of Resistance* is a series of vignettes about survival and truth, a study of resistance, be it political, social, emotional, physical, or otherwise. \$15. 8 pm at DiverseWorks, 1117 East Fwy off Main at Naylor. Information and reservations: 713/223-8346 or www.diverseworks.org.

22 (Sat.)

Desi Does It. Where's the party, yaar? Here, in Hermann Park, y'all. Learn about and celebrate the exotic, enchanting, and exhilarating culture of folk music, South Asian style, with Folk Music and Dances of India. Free, 7:30 pm at Miller Outdoor Theatre, Hermann Park. Info: 713/284-8350 or www.milleroutdoortheatre.com.

22 & 23, 29 & 30 (Sat. & Sun.)

International Festival. Jamaica takes center stage at this year's I-Fest. Downtown will fill with the scent of jerk... meat, that is. The Kingston Town area offers art, education, history, the Rasta philosophy, cooking demos, music (the Kingston sound is not limited to Bob Marley), and so much more, mon! \$8-\$12. Tickets and info: 713/654-8808 or www.ifest.org.

23 (Sun.)

Uprooted Roots Music. The Orange Show Eyeopener Tour closes April with the Hurricane Survivors' Blues, Jazz, and Zydeco Tour, featuring performances from our newest neighbors at venues that have supported this cultural collaboration. Roger Wood, author of *Down*

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WHO'S AFRAID OF EDWARD ALBEE? NOT THESE STUDENTS

Famed playwright Lanford Wilson fills in for Albee's 2006 Playwright's Workshop

Multiple Pulitzer Prize-winning dramatist Edward Albee is well known at the University of Houston as an esteemed professor and mentor to budding playwrights. He's offered classes to coach writers along the way, using an objective Platonic approach to teaching. (Rather than commanding, "Lose that character in the second act," he might ask, "That character in the second act, what's his significance and why is he there?")

But the class most sought after is his playwrights workshop, where a playwright can see her/his original play come to fruition on stage, all under the guidance of his strong personality.

This year around, Albee's colleague and fellow multiple award-winner (including The Edward Albee Last Frontier Award), Lanford Wilson led the class in Albee's stead. Both openly gay, Albee and Wilson have more to offer than any tuition could possibly afford a student. A semester under either's wing is invaluable. This season, Wilson helped bring five new playwrights to the forefront: Daryl Banner, Soo-Jin Lee, Nina McConigley, Donna Perkins, and Ken Watkins. —Eric A.T. Dieckman

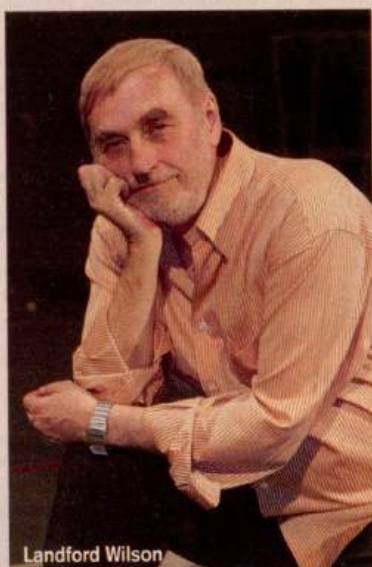
The Who: New playwrights from UH **The What:** Edward Albee's Playwright's Workshop

The Where: The Jose Quintero Lab Theatre, Wortham Theatre Building, UH Campus

The When: April 26-30, 7:30 p.m.; May 1, 2 p.m.

The Wherewithal: 713/743-2929 or

www.hfac.uh.edu/theatre/performances_edwardalbeenewplays.html



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in Houston and a passionate roots music historian, discusses the birth of zydeco music in Houston. \$45 for members, \$65 for non-members. 4:30-10 pm; all tours depart from The Orange Show, 2402 Munger at 12:30 pm sharp. Reservations: 713/926-6368 or oranges@orangeshow.org.

24 (Mon.)
Remembering. Holocaust Museum Houston hosts the annual citywide Yom HaShoah Commemoration as a time to remember those who perished in the Holocaust and to honor those who survived. 7 pm at Congregation Beth Yeshurun, 4525 Beechnut St. Information: 713/942-8000 or www.hmh.org.

25 (Tues.)
If I Could Talk to Pianimals, Pt. III. Da Camera presents the last of a series of three "Piano Dialogues" performances with some of the most innovative piano music ever written. The finale features Pedja Muzijevic's exploration of American musical inventor John Cage's hypnotic Sonatas and Interludes for prepared piano, or "a percussion ensemble controllable by one player," as Cage described it. \$20. 7:30 pm at The Menil Collection, 1515 Sul Ross. Tickets: 713/524-5050 or www.dacamera.com.

28 (Fri.)
Eclectic Boogaloo. BREAK! The Urban Funk Spectacular celebrates the past 30 years of hip-hop dancing. Various dance styles such as break-dance, lock, "electric boogaloo" or "popping," along with power tumbling and spinning (on head and hands) are accompanied by musical styles including funk, rap, hip hop, and soul. 7 pm at Jones Hall, 615 Louisiana St. Tickets start at \$18 (kids 12 and under are half price). Reservations: 713-227-45PA or www.spahouston.org.

29 (Sat.)
18 Holes for Bo. Progressive Women's Network, Inc. hosts its annual golf tournament. Perks include a Martini Bar on the 10th hole, tropical beverages, raffles, and prizes. The tournament benefits Bo's Place, which assists children who are grieving from the death of a parent or sibling. The Tournament Player package: \$98 per individual or \$375 per team of four; The New Golfers package: \$39 per individual. Registration begins at 10 am with the shotgun start at 12:30 pm at Cypresswood Golf Club, 21602 Cypresswood Dr. (Spring). Info: 832/969-2082, www.houstonpwn.org or www.bosplace.org.

29 (Sat.)
Christmas in April? A Christmas Songfest presents Kindred Spirits Fifth Annual Celebration with music tumbling by Bocado's DJ, Terry Flores. Benefits Assist-Hers, Bering Support Group, Houston Buyer's Club, and Lesbian Health Initiative. \$20 in advance, \$25 at the door (available at Acadian Bakery, Bocado's, Dacapo's, House of Coleman, Keys West, and Meteor). 8 pm-1 am at the Edwin Homberger Center, 2151 W. Holcombe.

30 (Sun.)
Ménage à Trois, Strings Attached. Love Triangle: Music of Clara Schumann, Robert Schumann, and Johannes Brahms focuses on the work of these three passionate composers whose relationship changed their lives and their music forever. As part of the Mukuru Concert Series, the performance raises funds for local HIV/STD prevention efforts among Houston's youth community. \$20 at the door, \$10 with student ID. 7 pm at Christ the King Lutheran Church, 2553 Rice Blvd. Information and donations: www.mukuru.org.

PLANNING AHEAD

MAY
May 1-4 (Mon.-Thurs.)
Emperor's New Clothes. Hopefully the wardrobe department won't get carried away with the notion of, "less is more," with this disrobably, err, disarmingly funny, loved-by-generations kids' story. Free. 11 am at Miller

Outdoor Theatre, Hermann Park. Information: 713/284-8350 or www.milleroutdoortheatre.com.

May 2 (Tues.)
David Sedaris, Selected Readings. Sedaris has a gift for uncovering charm (and hilarity) in the mundane. Whereas most couples would bore a person with the dynamics of their relationship, when Sedaris details the struggle between he and his partner Hugh to curb their public bickering—and the results of such failure—anyone can relate. And laugh out loud. \$17-\$42. 8 pm, at Cullen Theater, 500 Texas St. At press time, Sedaris's reading was sold out. For verification: 713/227-4772 or www.spahouston.org.

May 3 (Wed.)
A Little Day Music. Da Camera of Houston's free lunchtime performance series features the Trommel: A Percussion One Ensemble. Lunchtime listeners stand to win tickets in a drawing for the May 6 concert Season Finale. Noon in the Grand Foyer of the Wortham Theater Center, Texas at Smith. Information: 713/524-5050 or www.dacamera.com.

May 6 (Sat.)
12th Annual Drum Corps BBQ Bash. Hosted by the Drum Corps Tigers of Texas (roughly half its members being lesbian or gay), this percussive celebration includes live drum and bugle performances, BBQ, big-screen viewings of Drum Corps International (DCI) World Championships, and dozens of prizes in several contests. The Bash benefits Texas youths involved in DCI drum corps. \$10 in advance for adults, \$5 for kids 12 and under; \$15 at the door for adults, \$10 for kids. 11 am-2 pm at the Doss Community Center, 2500 Frick Rd. Tickets and information: 281/397-8124 or www.DrumCorpsTigers.org.

May 6 (Sat.)
6th Annual Houston Dragon Boat Festival. The Texas Dragon Boat Association invites spectators and participants to celebrate Asian culture with food, music, and entertainment. Each team is formed of 20 paddlers, a drummer, and a steersman racing down a 250-meter stretch of water. Who will win the "Dragon Cup"? Free. 8:30 am-4:30 pm at Buffalo Bayou, Allen's Landing Downtown (off Commerce between Main and Fannin). Information: 281/808-6855 or www.texasdragonboat.com.

May 6 (Sat.)
Da Camera's season finale includes one last salute to Mozart then leads into a tribute to Dmitri Shostakovich, celebrating the centennial of his birth in 1906. One of the most influential and popular composers of the 20th century, Shostakovich composed masterpieces of chamber music, opera, ballet, and symphonic and film music. \$21-\$36.50 (half price for seniors and students). 8 pm, at Cullen Theater, 500 Texas at Smith. Reservations: 713/524-5050 or www.dacamera.com.

May 12 (Fri.)
2006 Alley Theatre Ball. Everything's coming up G. Boyd! Ball chairs Chris Bryan and Trey Peacock host this evening honoring Alley Gregory Boyd, the AD responsible for transforming our little Alley into an avenue of international status. \$1,000 for individual tickets, \$10,000-\$75,000 for tables. Information and reservations: Kristin Brown, 713/228-9341, ext. 332.

PERFORMING ARTS

◆ **Carmen.** The sensual Spaniard Gypsy seduces Houston in this visually stunning production. Tickets start at \$20. April 15-May 6 at the Wortham Center's Brown Theater, 501 Texas. Tickets: 713/228-6737, 800/626-7372, or www.houstongrandopera.org.

◆ **The Coronation of Poppea (L'Incoronazione di Poppea).** Poppea, an ambitious courtesan, intends to sleep her way to the Roman throne. But how many

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people must Nero have murdered to make room for her in his royal boudoir? His wife Ottavia gets the axe, his counselor Seneca gets nicked for questioning his judgment. Passion and politics seldom mix well. Tickets start at \$20. April 15–May 6 at the Wortham Center's Brown Theater, 501 Texas. Tickets: 713/228-6737, 800/626-7372, or www.houstongrandopera.org.

◆ **The Dead Guy.** In the regional premiere of this reality TV skewering, a likeable schlep is given \$1,000,000 to spend in seven days on the condition that these are his last seven days alive. To sweeten the deal for viewers, they get to call in their votes on how he'll snuff it. Something exciting like a chainsaw accident? Or something humane and peaceful like a rattlesnake bite? Just how sick is the American crap-box-watching public? God help us all. \$25–\$35. April 5–23 at Stages Theatre, 3201 Allen Pkwy. Reservations: 713/527-0220 or www.stages theatre.com.

◆ **The Miser.** Molière's classic farce exposes a cold-hearted Harpagon for the ruthless, self-serving patriarch he is. Though he intends to marry off his children in the interest of quenching his greedy goals, his kids are onto him. Tickets start at \$19. April 7–30 at the Alley Theatre's Hubbard Stage, 615 Texas Ave. Reservations: 713/228-8421 or www.alleytheatre.org.

◆ **Orson's Shadow.** Orson Welles, Laurence Olivier, and Vivien Leigh come to life in this clever comedy that postulates the behind-the-scenes drama that must have accompanied a 1960 production of Ionesco's *Rhinoceros*. The frailty of these larger-than-life celebrities becomes apparent with the tangled romance between Olivier, Joan Plowright, and Olivier's wife Vivien Leigh. Their monolithic, albeit tender, egos lead to a hilarious and powerful clash of the titans. Tickets start at \$29. Through April 30 at The Alley's Neuhaus Stage, 615 Texas Ave. Tickets: 713/228-8421 or www.alleytheatre.org.

◆ **Ouroboros.** Two spiritually bound couples get stuck in a time loop on their way to Italy. Since time flows in opposite directions for each set of pilgrims, the play is performed in two distinct sequences, one a lighter piece (*Ouroboros: A Nun's Tale*) and the other a darker play (*Ouroboros: A Priest's Tale*). In each sequence, one couple is at the end of their pilgrimage, knowledgeable and destined to slowly forget as the play unfolds, and the other at the beginning, gaining understanding as the scenes play out. Both sequences in a rotating schedule. \$20–\$35; previews: \$10. Through April 9 at Main Street Theater Rice Village, 2540 Times Blvd. Tickets: 713/524-6706, www.mainstreettheater.com or www.ticketweb.com.

◆ **Pat Martino.** Da Camera of Houston brings jazz guitar virtuoso Pat Martino to town. His distinctive fat sound and improvisational genius have earned him many Grammy nominations. \$26–\$42 (half price for students and senior citizens). Friday, April 28, 8 pm, at Cullen Theater, 500 Texas at Smith. Tickets: 713/524-5050 or at www.dacamera.com.

◆ **The Rise Up, Fall Down: A Dance Concert.** University of Houston faculty and guest choreographers lead up-and-coming dancers through original recitals. April 21–23 at the University of Houston School of Theatre, entrance #16 off Cullen. Tickets: 713/743-2929.

◆ **The Sound of Murder.** William Fairchild's play focuses on the wife of an egotistical, successful children's author. She desperately wants a divorce from her hateful husband so she may marry her lover and have the children she has always longed for. Out of spite and to protect his career, the husband refuses to give his wife a divorce. She schemes the perfect murder. But nothing is ever perfect. Blackmail and revenge combine to make a shocking twist. \$14, \$12 for seniors, \$10 for students. Through April 15 at the Company OnStage, 536 Westbury Square. Tickets: 713/726-1219 or www.companyonstage.org.

◆ **What About Luv?** In this neurotic musical romantic comedy, a depressed Harry is about to jump off the Brooklyn Bridge just as his Milt shows up. Milt takes a moment off his plan to kill his wife, Ellen, to convince Harry life is worth another chance. Ellen then takes a chance at Harry and runs off with him, which in turn facilitates Milt's further plans to run off with a girl from his office. But that's not enough to tie off all loose ends in this vexing musical. \$20–\$23. Fridays and Saturdays at 8pm through April 8 at Theater LaB, 1706 Alamo, just off the 2100 block of Houston Ave. Info/reservations: 713/868-7516 or www.theaterlabhouston.com.

◆ **What the Butler Saw.** Considered a top British farce of the 20th century, Joe Orton's fast-paced comedy concerns a psychoanalyst who intends to interview a prospective secretary by seducing her; his nymphomaniac wife and the bellhop she has just brought home, and a state inspector who arrives at an inopportune moment to the private hospital where it all takes place. \$20–\$35 (previews: \$10). May 4–28 (previews Apr. 29, 30, May 3), showtimes vary, at Main Street Theater–Rice Village, 2540 Times Blvd. Tickets: 713/524-6706, www.mainstreettheater.com, or www.ticketweb.com.

PERFORMING ARTS

FOR YOUNG PEOPLE

◆ **Anastasia Krupnik.** In this quirky pre-adolescent coming-of-age romp, Anastasia decides to leave her family and become Catholic, until she finds out about confession. Eek! Recommended for 1st–6th grades. \$11; \$9 for children and students. April 22, 29, May 6, and 13 at 1 pm and 4 pm (April 11–May 19 for school groups only; call 713/524-7998 for available field trip times) at Main Street Theater–Chelsea Market, 4617 Montrose Blvd. Tickets: 713/524-6706, www.mainstreettheater.com, or www.ticketweb.com.

◆ **The Clown Who Ran Away.** Dodo, the clown, is tired of the circus and runs away with his best friend, Gladys, a very smart horse. Dodo makes new friends wherever he goes including a dollmaker, her assistant, and some wonderfully talented dolls. After saving the dolls from some bumbling robbers, Dodo must decide whether to stay with his new friends or return to the circus. \$7. Through April 15 at the Company OnStage, 536 Westbury Square. Tickets/more information: 713/726-1219 or www.companyonstage.org.

◆ **Composition Prize for Young Composers.** In honor of the late Robert Avalon (who was openly gay), artistic director of the Foundation for Modern Music, this competition is open to composers of any nationality who currently reside in the greater Houston area (Brazoria, Galveston, Fort Bend, Montgomery, Liberty, Waller, Harris, and Chambers counties) and who were born on or after April 15, 1981. Applications and submissions must be postmarked no later than April 15. For an application: 713/529-3928. Info: www.modernmusic.org.

◆ **Dr. Seuss' Gertrude McFuzz.** The Seussical tale of the girl-bird who learns to love herself finds new life with a rich musical score including compositions from Rimsky-Korsakov and Rossini. \$10–\$15. Fri., April 28, 7:30 pm (pre-concert activities begin at 6:30 pm), at The Cynthia Woods Mitchell Pavilion, 2005 Lake Robbins Dr., The Woodlands. Info/reservations: 713/629-370, 281/363-3300, www.ticketmaster.com, or www.pavilion.woodlandscenter.org.

◆ **The Mathematics of Hip Hop.** Get served and schooled by Unergworks dance group as they unravel the role of math and numbers in the world of hip hop. That's Old School and New School kicking it in full effect just before Summer school, yo! Da show is free. G. April 18, 11 am, at Miller Outdoor Theatre, Hermann Park. For more information: 713/284-8350 or www.milleroutdoortheatre.com.

RADIO

◆ **After Hours.** Saturdays, 1–4 am. Featuring the QMZ (Queer Music Zone) with Jimmy Carper. KPFT 90.1 FM, 713/526-5738.

◆ **Queer Voices.** Mondays, 7–9 pm. Features, news, music, interviews, reviews, and commentary. KPFT 90.1 FM, 713/526-4000.

ART/PHOTOGRAPHY

◆ **2006 School of Art Masters Thesis Exhibition.** Stop. Pencils down. Place your works on the wall or install them on the floor. Several years of development and research culminates for the next generation of artists in this show of new ideas and fresh points of view. April 15–29 at Blaffer Gallery, University of Houston, Fine Arts building. Info: 713/743-9530 or www.blaffergallery.org.

◆ **Amperstand Clayboard Show.** We all know that little saying about April showers. Let's just hope it doesn't rain on this showing of water media, ranging in style from abstract to realistic. April 3–May 5 at the Watercolor Art Society–Houston, 1601 W. Alabama. Information: 713/942-9966 or www.watercolorhouston.org.

◆ **ArtWalk.** The Galveston Arts Center presents the Arthouse Texas Prize. The exhibit features works from the four finalists: video from Eileen Maxson (Houston); drawings by Robyn O'Neil (Houston); sculptures by Robert A. Pruitt (Houston); and paintings and video by Ludwig Schwarz (Dallas). Saturday, April 15, from 6–9 pm, through May 28. Information: 409/763-2403 or www.galvestonartscenter.org.

◆ **Body Worlds 3: The Anatomical Exhibition of Real Human Bodies.** You've seen the curious, creepy billboards and wondered, "What the Hell?" Now's your chance to find out and marvel at the wonder of Dr. Gunther von Hagens' works of plastination, wherein bodies are perfectly preserved after death. According to Doctor Death, this particular exhibit takes this amalgam of art, science, anatomy, and the macabre to its greatest heights yet. \$13–\$22. Through Sept. 4 at the Museum of Natural Science, One Hermann Circle Dr. Info: 713/639-4629 or www.hmns.org. Información en español: 713/469-4603.

◆ **David A. Brown: Urban Cathedral.** Houston-based artist Brown manages to reinterpret the world through the lens of his camera in a way that can only be described as magical. In *Urban Cathedral*, Brown uses digital photographs of the urban landscape to create an otherworldly ephemeral environment of color, pattern, and super-saturated light. Through April 15 at DiverseWorks, 1117 East Fwy off Main at Naylor. Information: 713/223-8346 or www.diverseworks.org.

◆ **David Levinthal: Blackface.** Through large-scale Polaroids, Levinthal engages the racist portrayal of African Americans in everyday objects dating from the 19th and early 20th centuries, drawing on imagery that continues to haunt the American memory. Through May 7 at the Menil Collection, 1515 Sul Ross. For information: 713/525-9400 or www.menil.org.

◆ **Dinosaurs: Ancient Fossils, New Discoveries** highlights ongoing, cutting-edge research by leading paleontologists around the world on topics such as how dinosaurs looked, behaved, moved, and became extinct. Among prehistoric animals like the albertosaurs, apatosaurus, and Protoceratops from the rich fossil beds of China's Liaoning Province, look for the dromaeosaur. Covered from head to tail with downy fluff and primitive feathers, this is the first dinosaur found with its entire body covering intact. Museum of Natural Science, One Hermann Circle Dr. Information: 713/639-4629 or www.hmns.org. Información en español: 713/639-4603.

◆ **The Dinosaur Prophecy.** Long before dinosaurs'

massive extinction 65 million years ago, many individual species simply disappeared. Visit dinosaur graveyards, study their bones, and reconstruct how these creatures lived and died to solve four famous cases. Museum of Natural Science's Burke Baker Planetarium, One Hermann Circle Dr. Information: 713/639-4629 or www.hmns.org. Información en español: 713/639-4603.

◆ **Dudes, Dames and Desperados: Printing in the 19th Century American West.** This collection of historical posters, newspapers, rodeo hand bills, and dime novels—many of which date from the 1850s and earlier—tells the story of the West through the pop culture of its time. Look for vigilant wanted posters and posters announcing "Buffalo Bill's Wild West." \$5 for adults; \$2 for kids, students, seniors. Through April at the Museum of Printing History, 1324 West Clay St. Info: 713/522-4652 or www.printingmuseum.org.

◆ **Eva Hesse Drawing.** Though Hesse is associated mainly with the medium of sculpture, drawing lies at the core of her work. From colored paper studies to Minimalist images to sketches on loose leaf and journal pages, her drawings were central to the development of her sculptures. Through April 23 at the Menil Collection, 1515 Sul Ross. Info: 713/525-9400 or www.menil.org.

◆ **In a Confined Silence.** Both a survivor and a partisan, Miriam Brysk was inspired to create mixed-media photo collages following a recent tour of ghettos and concentration camps in Eastern Europe. Soft focus and minimal details capture her feelings of contemplation. April 21–Sept. 3 at the Holocaust Museum Houston's Central Gallery, 5401 Caroline St. (April 23: Brysk speaks at 4 pm in the Herzstein Theater; reception for Brysk follows from 5–7 pm.) Info: 713/942-8000 or www.hmh.org.

◆ **Jim Love: From Now On.** the first major museum exhibition in 20 years to focus on the work of the recently deceased Houston sculptor, brings together nearly 200 works from 1957 to the present. April 22–July 2 at the Contemporary Arts Museum Houston, 5216 Montrose Blvd. Info: 713/284-8250 or www.camh.org.

◆ **Joseph Havel: A Decade of Sculpture 1996–2006.** An internationally known artist and director of the Glassell School of Art, Havel presents 31 of his large-scale sculptures. Through June 18 at the Museum of Fine Arts, Caroline Weiss Law Building, 1001 Bissonnet. Information: 713/639-7300 or www.mfah.org. Información en español: 713/639-7379. TDD/TYY for the hearing impaired: 713/639-7390.

◆ **Killer Animation.** In this exhibit, international artists demonstrate how the limits of animation are being pushed to levels never before imagined. April 28–June 10 (opening reception: April 28, 6–8 pm) at DiverseWorks, 1117 East Fwy off Main at Naylor. Information: 713/223-8346 or www.diverseworks.org.

◆ **Mother Earth.** Modern, abstract, local artists show their earthiest, most organic works: sunsets, landscapes, and one horticulture-artist brings bonsai trees he's been growing for the past 25 years. The art and the trees are for sale. Sippora Gallery, 234 W. Gray. Info: 713/520-1085 or www.sippora.com.

◆ **New Media Exhibition.** Shut-ins, here's a show tailor-made for you. D-Werx's new online gallery was conceived with the web in mind. Turn on, log in, freak out. April 28–June 10 (opening reception: April 28, 6–8 pm) at DiverseWorks, 1117 East Fwy off Main at Naylor. Info: 713/223-8346 or www.diverseworks.org.

◆ **Perspectives 151: Dan Steinhilber.** Steinhilber's sculptures are comprised of everyday consumer objects—plastic spoons, wire hangers, paper cups, take-out containers, chewing gum—drawing attention to the culture of consumption. In using such materials within an accumulated state, Steinhilber creates monumental sculptures that reveal serene beauty in the mundane. Free admission. Through June 4 at the Contemporary

Arts Museum Houston, 5216 Montrose Blvd. For information: 713/284-8250 or www.camh.org.

◆ **The Royal Tombs of Ur: Ancient Treasures from Modern Iraq.** In this new exhibition, stunning jewels, fearsome weapons wrought from precious metals, and gilt objects of grandeur created by this ancient and highly advanced Mesopotamian civilization are presented alongside compelling evidence of human sacrifice. \$9, \$8 for children 3–11. Through Aug. 13 at the Houston Museum of Natural Science, One Hermann Circle Dr. Info: 713/639-4629 or www.hmns.org. Información en español: 713/469-4603.

◆ **Singular Multiples: The Peter Blum Edition Archive, 1980–1994, Installation I.** The first of three graphic arts exhibits opens the beginning of the largest museum exhibit ever devoted to the graphic arts of the 20th century. Every stage of production is represented, from preparatory drawings to finished products. April 23–Sept. 24 at the Museum of Fine Arts' Caroline Weiss Law Building, 1001 Bissonnet. Info: 713/639-7300 or www.mfah.org (en Español: 713/639-7379).

◆ **The Space Between: FotoFest 2006.** The Mukuru "Arts for AIDS" series combines performance and visual art to raise awareness of critical HIV/AIDS issues. All proceeds benefit Houston through the Community Partnerships in HIV Prevention Program, developed by AIDS Foundation Houston. The work of three photographers illustrates the beauty and meaning of ongoing relationships that affect their lives. Among them, Rodney Waters' portraits and audio recordings of HIV-positive individuals reflect their struggles with the disease that has permanently changed them and the world around them. Free. Through April 23 at White-Swan Studio, 1113 Vine Street, Suite 202. Info: www.mukuru.org or www.fotofest.org.

◆ **Survivors' Journeys.** As part of the Holocaust Museum's 10th-anniversary celebration, this exhibit explores the successes of survivors who moved to Houston shortly after liberation through artifacts and photographs on loan from the survivors and their families. Free. Through Sept. 17 at the Minberg Gallery of the Holocaust Museum Houston, 5401 Caroline St. Info: 713/942-8000 or visit www.hmh.org.

◆ **Two Women Look West: Photographs of King Ranch by Helen Kleberg and Toni Frissell.** Approximately 65 photos taken from the 1930s to the 1960s document King Ranch, one of the most affluent and influential ranches in Texas. Helen Kleberg, wife of Robert Kleberg, manager of the ranch, a notable amateur photographer, photographed the ranch for 30 years. Frissell, a friend and fashion/photojournalist from New York, also snapped many a shot between 1939 and 1944. The exhibit portrays a spectacular ranch from two highly disparate points of view. Through May 7 at the Museum of Fine Arts, Houston, 1001 Bissonnet. Information: 713/639-7300 or www.mfah.org.

◆ **Yale Street Arts Market** is an exciting Heights market created for local artists to display and sell original works of art. Featuring artists from around Houston. Local musicians entertain all day. It's a mini art festival in the Heights! Every month on 1st Saturday. Now on 19th Street! 548 West 19th at Wind Water Gallery's parking lot. Info: www.YaleStreetMarket.com. Be sure to visit The Artful Corner at 3423 White Oak Blvd., 713/426-4ART. ■

CALENDAR DEADLINE
for the May issue:
Monday, April 10, 5 p.m.

Time Out with OUTSMART

SPECIAL PROMOTIONS AND ADVERTISING

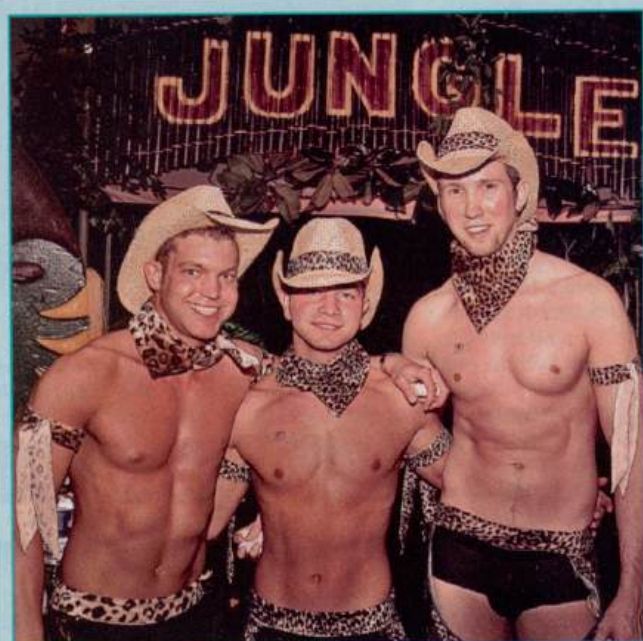
Time Out



The OUTSMART team raised nearly \$7,000 for AIDS Walk Houston.

FOOT PATROL

The OUTSMART team posed in Sam Houston Park just before the start of AIDS Walk on March 12. The annual event raised more than \$700,000 for AIDS Foundation Houston and 17 other HIV/AIDS service organizations.



Three of the shirtless throng at the Jungle event last year.

FOR YOUR CALENDAR

Check out these events sponsored by OUTSMART:
4/13-16 **Jungle 14**, the annual party weekend hosted by Bayou City Boys Club benefiting seven HIV/AIDS service organizations including People With AIDS Coalition of Houston. Info: www.junglehouston.org.
4/16 **Bunnies on the Bayou**, the downtown social event benefiting Houston GLBT Community Center and nine other groups. Info: www.bunnies.org.
4/23 **Spring Tea Dance** at the Daily Review Café, benefiting Darla's School for Mentally Retarded Adults. Info: www.darlas.org.
4/29 **Roaring '20s Ball**, the Human Rights Campaign Houston gala. Info: www.hrchoouston.org.



Houston Pride Band members (in front, l-r) Melissa Thompson, Lisa Mace (holding magazine), Kyler Landry (behind Mace), Debbie Hunt, Connie Moore, Diane Schattenberg, Michael Schumacher, (in back, l-r) J.R. Valdez, and Les Wood posed with OUTSMART in Palm Springs. Russell Ben Williams (not pictured) joined them on the Lesbian & Gay Band Association trip.

SHOW US YOUR OUTSMART!

Members of the Houston Pride Band toted a copy of OUTSMART to Palm Springs, California, while participating in the Lesbian & Gay Band Association Conference in November.

Going out of town? Take OUTSMART along. Snap a picture of yourself at your destination and send it to us. We will publish our favorites. Readers who submit photos that we print will be entered into a drawing for prizes. Send *high-resolution* images to editor@OutSmartMagazine or mail photos to 3406 Audubon, Houston, TX 77006.

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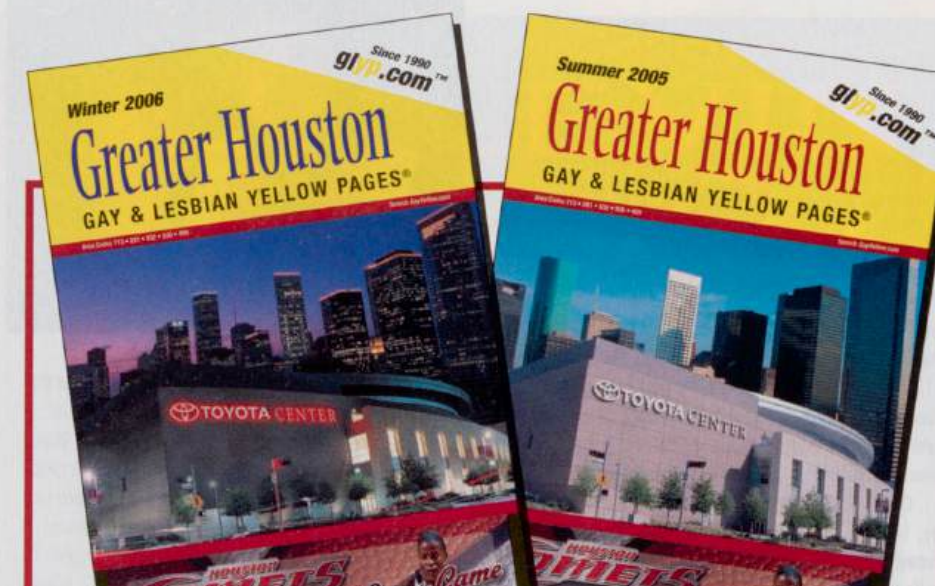


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Business News

Suzanne Anderson Properties owner/managing broker **Mike Huff** (standing, l) and founding broker **Suzanne Anderson** (seated, r) opened the firm's new headquarters in a historic building in the Heights (741 East 11th St., 713/529-8484) with a March 14 reception. They were joined by manager **Michael Johnson** (standing, r) and broker associate **Debra Brashears** (seated, l). Anderson, who established the real-estate firm in the early '80s, sold out to Huff a year ago but continues to work in the firm's Montrose office (239 Westheimer, 713/529-8484).



Suzanne Anderson Properties also now has an office in Galveston (409/763-8484) and representation in the Austin/Hill Country area (reached through Laurie Marques, 713/206-5989). The firm websites are www.suzanneandersonproperties.com and www.andersonprop.com.



Don Puryear has opened the first **Happy Tails Dog Spa** franchise location in Texas at 1315 Waugh Dr. (713/522-8144). Happy Tails offers dog day care, grooming services, and boarding for dogs of all ages. A state-of-the-art Internet video monitoring system allows owners to view their dogs online during spa hours.

On April 23, Happy Tails will host a pet adoption day, 1-4 p.m., for the Houston Humane Society. **Jim Tweedy**, the popular artist known for his Charlie the RedCat and Jim Tweedy's Friendly Doggies illustrations, will appear to sign prints of his work for donations to the Humane Society. **Hollywood Frame Gallery** (2427 Bissonnet, 713/942-8885), the exclusive representative in Texas for Tweedy's Charlie the RedCat and Friendly Doggies drawings, will participate in the event.

Happy To Be Here, Inc., the Virginia-based franchise company of Happy Tails Dog Spa, maintains seven locations in Virginia and Maryland in addition to the new Houston facility. The website is www.happytailsdogspa.com.



Houston Gym staff (standing, l-r) **Bobby Arnold**, **Wes Simon**, **Israel Rivera**, co-owner **Johnnie West**, **Tony Brannon**, co-owner **John Langman**, and **Valerie Elliot** (seated) recently celebrated the facility's 12th year in business. Houston Gym has expanded its free-weight area, remodeled the locker room, and installed new equipment, including state-of-the-art LifeFitness Lifecycles and an LCD flat-screen satellite cardio theater. "We also have an all-new awesome aerobic studio with full class schedule including zumba, spinning, yoga, Tae Bo, and Pilates," Langman says.

Through April 30, members can join for \$18 per month.

Houston Gym is located at 1501 Durham. The phone number is 713/880-9191, and the website is www.houstongym.com.



In November, **Phil De Marco** (l) and **Chito Bernardo** opened **Lost Bayou Guest House** in Galveston. The five-bedroom bed-and-breakfast is housed in an 1890 Victorian Classical Revival residence. Amenities include continental breakfast and access to a health room and dry sauna. This month, Bernardo will begin offering massages for guests. Prices start at \$110 per night.

Lost Bayou Guest House is located at 1607 Avenue L in Galveston. The phone number is 409/770-0688, and the website is www.lostbayou.com.



Jim Gray opened **Hurricane Café** in Galveston last month. Gray, formerly a popular long-time bartender at The Ripcord, had planned to open a restaurant

in Montrose but decided to move to Galveston when a Seawall Boulevard property became available. His new restaurant, which specializes in gourmet burgers, salads, and chicken wings, features a patio with a Gulf view and serves breakfast daily.

Hurricane Café, which is open Wednesday through Sunday, is located at 1328 Seawall Blvd. The phone number is 409/770-WING.

Along with an international menu, gift shop, art exchange, and bookstore, the **Julie Victoria Café** in Rice Village features an innovative fundraising endeavor. The restaurant's parent company, **Fuji International**, donates profits realized from dessert and catering sales to the homeless housing initiatives of the West Heights Housing Shelter. Longtime GLBT community activist **Matt Locklin**, who established the shelter and works with Julie Victoria Café as corporate director, says \$10,000 was raised in fiscal year 2005. He expects more than \$30,000 in donations in fiscal year 2006. Locklin is also the co-chair of the city Housing Opportunities for People With AIDS citizens' council.



The staff at Julie Victoria Café (2347 University Blvd., 713/864-1795) includes (l-r) Locklin, pastry chef **Ryan Corran**, corporate chef **Jermaine Lisby**, and chef **Scott Conner**. The restaurant—planned to be the first of a city-wide chain—is open 8 a.m.-8 p.m. daily and until 2 a.m. on Friday and Saturday. Live jazz is featured on Saturday nights.

Ophthalmologist **Marc Sanders, M.D., F.A.C.S.**, has announced that he has begun using the new AcrySof ReSTOR intraocular lens for some cataract patients in his **Diagnostic Eye Center** practice. "With the new AcrySof ReSTOR IOL, patients have the potential to reduce their reliance on glasses," Dr. Sanders says. "This new lens is a breakthrough in cataract surgery that we are proud to offer our patients."

Diagnostic Eye Center has two locations: 3405 Edloe, Suite 300, and 1213 Hermann Dr., Suite 110. The phone number is 713/797-1500, and the website is www.diagnosticeyecenter.com.

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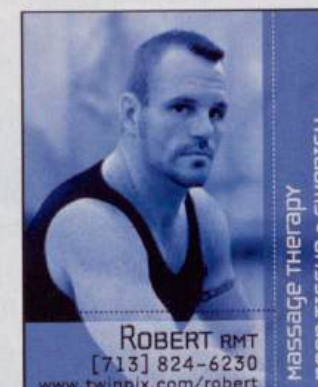


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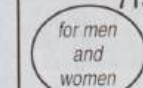
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1972 Fairview 713/521-2611
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1117 Missouri 713/529-3450
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BAR & CLUB GUIDE

HOUSTON

BARTINI

This club near the Westheimer curve now features a second ladies' nights. Passionate Sundays, on the second and fourth Sunday, in addition to the Exquisite Wednesdays ladies' night. 1318 Westheimer • 713/526-2271.

BOCADOS

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

BRAZOS RIVER BOTTOM

The BRB, Houston's leading gay country-western bar, is located in Midtown, just outside Montrose. Expect to see some fast and fancy two-stepping. Southern Country dance club offers lessons on Thursday night. 2400 Brazos • 713/528-9192.

BRICKS II

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

CHANCES/THE NEW BARN/G-SPOT

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

CLUB 1415

On Wednesday, Boys & Girls Club takes over the second-floor club space. Papi Chulo night on Thursday features an amateur strip contest. Fridays-Sundays are special-event nights. 1415 California • 713/522-7066.

CLUB BIG YO

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

CLUB INERGY

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

COUSINS

Drag fans frequent this club in the heart of Montrose for its campy shows on Thursday, Friday, Saturday, and Sunday. 817 Fairview • 713/528-9204.

LA CUEVA TEQUILA LOUNGE

Arturo Caluiche recently opened this club in the former Briar Patch location, featuring 86 top brands of tequila in the full bar. Though La Cueva is not specifically a gay bar, Caluiche welcomes all tequila fans. 2312 Crocker • 832/203-8574.

DEAN'S CREDIT CLOTHING

DJ and promoter Gracie Chavez presents Les Femmes de la Nuit, the monthly women's DJ and music night, at this downtown nightclub. Chavez reports that the crowd includes a growing contingent of queer folk. 316 Main • 713/227-3326 (Dean's), 713/858-6227 (Chavez) • www.myspace.com/lesfemmesdelanuit.



G-SPOT

George Smith and his Icon Media pack the spot above Aztec's (known as Eve on Friday and Saturday) for the new Wet Wednesday hip-hop night and again on Sunday. 2209 Richmond.

GUAVA LAMP

The club left Shepherd Plaza and recently reopened with a larger space near Allen Parkway. Guava Lamp presents karaoke nights on Sunday and Wednesday and offers a free happy hour buffet on Friday. 570 Wough • 713/624-3359.

HOUSE OF FINESSE

Deirdre Sam is taking a break from hosting monthly

BEHIND THE BAR

WHO: Julia Baltimore

WHERE: Bartini
(1318 Westheimer,
713/526-2271)

WHAT'S UP: Bartini is one of the venues for May 2-8 Houston Splash activities (see page 16).

men's and women's socials. She continues to offer her facility near the Texas Southern University campus for special events. 2912 Wentworth • 713/522-6074 • www.houseoffinesse.com.

JEFFRIES

This new club opened in December in the old O Houston spot. Jeffries is a nonsmoking establishment, but there are enclosed smoking patios. Weekly events include T-Dance on Sunday afternoon and a ladies' night on Wednesday. 700 Pacific • www.jeffriesbar.com.

JR'S BAR & GRILL

The features of this Montrose standard include pool tables, go-go boys, and karaoke. Kafi, named favorite drag queen in the 2006 Gayest & Greatest reader poll, hosts popular shows Sunday through Wednesday. 808 Pacific • 713/521-2519.

KEYS WEST

Named best piano bar in the 2005 Gayest & Greatest reader poll, this nightclub features regular performers and guest entertainers. The deck provides a knockout skyline view. 817 West Dallas • 713/571-7870 • www.keyswest.com.

MANGO VIDEO LOUNGE

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

MARY'S

The oldest gay club in Houston, this is a legendary nightclub, though not as notorious as in days past. Mary's hosts many community fundraisers, including the Imperial Court of Houston's Jukebox Wednesdays event. 1022 Westheimer • 713/527-9669.

METEOR

Weekly evenings at this Montrose video bar include Musical Theatre Night on Monday, Drag Queen Bingo on Tuesday, and Professional Women's Happy Hour on the first and third Wednesday. 2306 Genesee • 713/521-0123 • www.meteorhouston.com.

MICHAEL'S OUTPOST

This neighborhood hangout has become a sing-along piano bar. A regular roster of keyboardists, including Phil Hooper and Lauri Gage, performs nightly Tuesday-Saturday. 1419 Richmond • 713/520-8446.

MO MONG

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

MONTROSE MINING COMPANY

Great-looking male dancers bump and grind every night at this leather/denim spot. The two-tier back patio 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 hiatus as a nongay music venue, Rich's has

returned as the dance club you knew. The club now features Griz, a night of diva music (from Beyoncé to Whitney) with DJ Joe Ross, on Friday. 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 2005 Gayest & Greatest poll. The Black Hawk Leather shop is located inside the club. 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

In the 2005 Gayest & Greatest poll, readers named this spot the best club for dancing and JD Arnold favorite DJ. Besides shirtless boys, special attractions include Café Con Leche with DJ Cubanito on Wednesday. 810 Pacific • 713/529-SOBE (7623) • www.SouthBeachTheNightclub.com.

VIVIANA'S

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

XCAPE

Lynica 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.

RANCH HILL SALOON

The Conroe club has packed up and moved south to a new home near The Woodlands. The Spring location still features the Wall of Fame and the famous saddle from the old watering hole. • 24704 I-45 North, Suite 103 • 281/298-9035 • www.ranchhill.com.

GARZA'S KON TIKI

This Strand spot features male dancers Friday-Sunday and karaoke hosted by Sukie-Sukie Queen Lisa on Monday and Wednesday. 315 Tremont • 409/765-5805 • www.thekontiki.com.

THE PINK DOLPHIN

Opened by Eldridge Longinos, formerly the Paradise Guest House proprietor, this club in the old 3rd Coast Beach Bar location offers an expansive Gulf view. 9th and Seawall Boulevard • 409/621-1808.

ROBERT'S LAFITTE

A neighborhood bar, the Island institution attracts a colorful crowd of regulars and travelers. The private patio includes a swimming pool. On Saturday and Sunday nights, the Ladies of Lafitte show takes the stage. 2501 Avenue Q (at 25th) • 409/765-9092.

3RD COAST BEACH BAR

OutSmart readers voted this Seawall spot the Island bar with the best happy hour in the 2005 Gayest & Greatest poll. Thursday is karaoke night. 3rd Coast presents cabaret/variety shows on Friday and Saturday nights. 31st and Seawall Blvd. • 409/766-6911 • www.3rdcoastbar.com.

THE TREMONT HOUSE

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

UNDERCURRENT

Marvin Grenier and Keith Curry have moved their club 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.

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 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.

NOTE: OutSmart received a report from a reader and former Beaumont resident that Chris' Crockett Street Pub had received extensive damage during Hurricane Rita and that Hooligan's suffered extensive vandalism in the aftermath of the storm and would not reopen. Sources in Beaumont have indicated that the owners of Crockett Street Pub plan to reopen their club.

Bryan/College Station

HALO VIDEO BAR

The only GLBT dance club in Bryan/College station, this sleek spot is open Thursday-Saturday. Smack in the middle of Aggieland, "our venue is always packed with the hotties," the owners promise. 121 North Main • 979/823-6174 • www.haloabc.com.

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- Family Concerns
- Coming-Out
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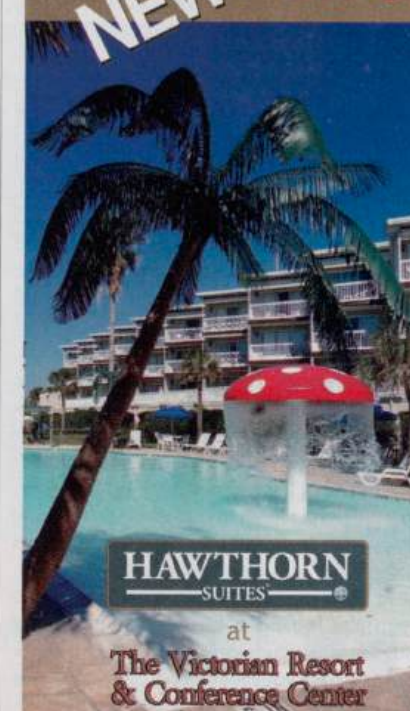
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SignOut

by Lilly Roddy

The energies this month are a lot lighter than we have experienced in several months and should be easier to contend with. We only have Saturn going direct on the 5th and continuing her journey through Leo. This will place some extra pressure on the fixed signs (Leo, Aquarius, Taurus, and Scorpio) to get on with their decision-making. • Easter this year is on the 16th. Easter is always the first Sunday after the full Moon, as the Sun has entered the sign of Aries. • Good days this month are April 1, 2, 3, 4, 15, 16, 19, 20, and 29. Days to avoid activity are April 7, 8, 13, 17, 18, 24, and 30. • The Sun is in Aries as we begin the month and moves into Taurus on the 20th. Mercury is wading through Pisces and fires into Aries on the 16th. Venus is in Aquarius but floats into lovely Pisces on the 5th. Mars continues his journey through Gemini but dives into Cancer on the 13th.

ARIES (March 21–April 19). As this is your Solar Return time (birthday month), you are in the process of finishing up things and about to restart your yearly cycle. Try to take a few days before your birthday for some reflection or meditation. Make sure that you celebrate your time of rebirth, reflective of the spring season. You can be very productive with your creative energy this year, but each of your personal projects must have a goal attached to it. By mid-month, your focus shifts to home and family. Unresolved issues with your family come to the surface. Some of you will want to make your home a much more comfy place.

GEMINI (May 21–June 21). You are more direct than usual with Mars, planet of confrontation and action, moving through your sign until mid-month. This is a wonderful time to begin any new project—even better if it is associated with your career. You need a spark in that area of your life. Relationships are a bit dicey, especially around the 7th and 8th. If there are problems, you can bet they will be boiling over. Otherwise, if all is well in your relationship arena, this is a great time to get out and party with that someone special. Sexual energies are very strong.

CANCER (June 22–July 22). I could tell you that this is a busy time, but I am sure you already know that. This month there is a strong focus on your career. The period after the 13th is an excellent time to initiate some new projects in that area. You are feeling rather restless, but you are extra motivated. You may not be the easiest person to get along with during the last part of the month. This may add some spice and some conflict in your relationships. Try to make the best of this and don't spiral into that "Why me?" whiny part of you. On another front, you are certainly on a spiritual quest for knowledge, and you are trying to make your universe a more integrated place. Try spending some time with some philosophers. They can really add to your life.

LEO (July 23–August 22). Saturn, planet of discipline and goals, is moving forward in your



TAURUS (April 20–May 20). The month opens with you trying to focus on your career and the friends in your life. Hopefully, with your career you are really following your heart and not just trying to do a job. Otherwise, you are just dragging yourself to work each day. You will find that friends and social organizations are very supportive and helpful at this time. They can really provide you some direction about your career, especially if you are confused about a direction. Make sure that you take some time for yourself by the end of the month. You will need the rest and retreat.

sign this month. You will feel very motivated to fix the problems you have in your life or get rid of the things that are causing the irritation. If you try to avoid your responsibility, Saturn will be right there with her guilt stick, making sure that you are feeling appropriately remorseful. Make sure that the decisions that you make are the best for you and not just made to please others. Otherwise, you will be discounted by those for whom you do these things. Relationships are more tense because you expect more from them. Keep your expectations very, very realistic.

VIRGO (August 23–September 22). With Mars, planet of action, moving through your career sector, you are ready to start new projects. You may also appear to be impatient or a bit scattered, especially around the 7th and 8th. Financial matters are floating around in the back of your brain. Don't delay. Get those taxes done so you can feel free. Your relationship patterns are a bit stale and create some distance between you and your partner. Try to find something totally new and different—the quirkier the better. Family ties keep moving away. If they are meant to return, they will do so on their own.

LIBRA (September 23–October 23). With the planets in Aries, they really stimulate the relationship sector of your horoscope. If you are single, this is a great time to get out and meet new people for fun or for business. If you are attached to someone, this is a wonderful month to add some amusement to your relationship. Sometimes people use fights as a substitute way of bringing each other together. Try not to be one of those people. At work right now, you are feeling a bit overwhelmed and trapped. Change your work space, your hours, or the location where you meet clients. This will relieve some of the boredom.

SCORPIO (October 24–November 21). You continue on this very busy time with your emphasis focused on your work environment. You are getting

things cleaned up there and trying to get everything in its place. You feel that mess is causing you to lose money and waste your time looking for stuff. Make sure that you have time for fun and play during the last half of the month. With your career, you are ready to move ahead with new plans. Get ready for this to kick in right after the 10th and get another boost with the New Moon on the 27th.

SAGITTARIUS (November 22–December 21). Home and family and security issues were the center of attention in March, but with this month you are ready for some time to get away from routines and busy schedules. You are feeling very creative. A fun class or project could provide an outlet for that. Your relationship arena is activated with Mars, planet of sexual activity, visiting there until mid-month. This is certainly not a time to be alone. Conflicts can arise in existing relationships. These only represent issues that need to be addressed instead of being swept under the rug.

CAPRICORN (December 22–January 19). Your interests this month are your home and family. You are trying to create the best environment to live in that you can. You may be motivated to do some remodeling, move, or just rearrange the furniture. In addition, you will be feeling nostalgic about your family and your past. This may be a great time to have everyone over for an Easter celebration. Keep an eye on your money and investments. You are very interested in finding a way to make your future more secure, and you are more conservative than usual. Let your intuition be your guide.

AQUARIUS (January 20–February 18). You will feel more on track after the 5th of this month with Saturn going direct. You have been in something of a hold position since the end of the year. Your career continues to keep you busy and is a primary focus in your life. You are compelled to follow your intuition, and you are not able to think everything through. This is not so easy for you water-bearers. Relationships need new long-term goals and directions. This can be a time of renewal or endings in that area of your life. You certainly won't be indecisive.

PISCES (February 19–March 20). This month brings you a time to reevaluate your sense of self-worth, review your talents and skills, and consider seeking a pay raise at work. You are very active and are putting yourself first. This can be a time that you look for another job if you are not recognized or valued enough where you work. Family can bring some conflicts. Make sure that you want to get involved and that you take your boundaries with you. Next month is a very good time for you to meet someone new, if you are single, or it can see a real boost to your existing relationship. Don't waste your time with people who don't appreciate you.

Read Lilly Roddy's 2006 forecast, which appeared in our January issue ("Word from Above"), at www.outsmartmagazine.com.



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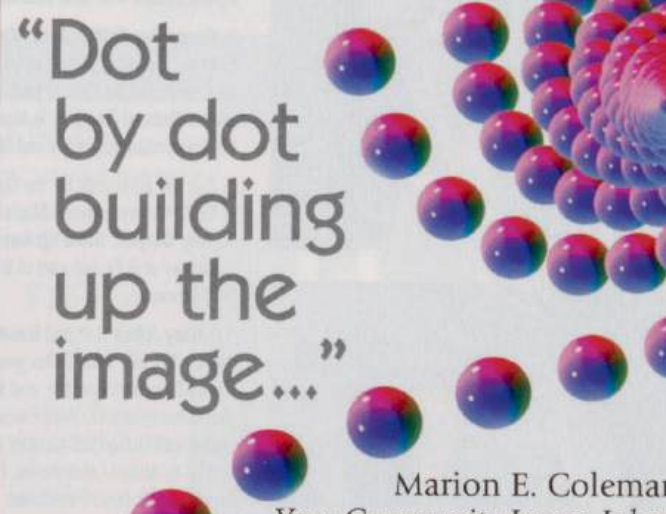
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OUT IN HOUSTON

1 At the Feb. 24 Executive and Professional Association of Houston rodeo kick-off at Brazos River Bottom, **Allen Balla** (r) greeted Puppet Pazzazz owner **Greg Ruhe**, beneath his creation, **Bossy Mae Beauvine**.

2 **Richard Peoples** competed as part of the Human Rights Campaign Houston team in the Jan. 14 Houston Marathon.

3 **Bill Bridges** (l) greeted actor/director **Tommy Tune** ("Gaily In Tune," January) following the Jan. 18 performance of *Dr. Dolittle* at the Theatre Under The Stars Out at TUTS night at Arista in the Hobby Center. On May 1, TUTS presents the fourth annual Tommy Tune Awards for high school musical theater productions.

4 Human Rights Campaign president **Joe Solmonese** (second from l) attended the Jan. 18 table-captains event at the Museum of Fine Arts, Houston for the HRC Houston gala with (l-r) event chairs **Matt Burrus**, **Fiona Dawson**, and **Alton LaDay**. The theme of the Apr. 29 gala at the Hilton Americas is the Roaring 20s Ball.

5 Participants in the monthly Queer Bingo hosted by the Houston GLBT Community Center on Feb. 18 included **Steven Bratsen**; **Jerry Simoneaux**, community center president **Christopher Bown**; **Terrence O'Neill**, CEO of Amigos Volunteers in Education and Service, February raffle beneficiary; Queer Bingo co-host **Cinnamon**; and **Daniel G. Garza**, AVES project coordinator. The next Queer Bingo fundraiser evening is April 15 at Club 1415.

6 **Ellen Cohen**, Democratic candidate for Texas House District 13, welcomed supporters to the opening of her campaign headquarters on Jan. 19. Cohen faces Republican incumbent **Martha Wong** in November.

7 Families that enjoyed the Dec. 3 Houston Gay & Lesbian Parents gingerbread-house event included moms **Debra Kearney** (l) and **Linda Gibbs** with sons **Joshua**, **Jordan**, and **Freddy**.

8 **Barry Ouellette** (l) and **Victor Martinez** ("On Freedom's Frontier," February) were among the same-gender couples that participated in the Feb. 17 protest at the county courthouse as part of National Freedom To Marry Week, organized in Houston by the Foundation for Family and Marriage Equality.

9 The Feb 26 benefit for the Gulf Coast Archive and Museum of GLBT History featured **Marsha Mink** (a.k.a. **Greg Davis**), **Jimmy Carper**, **Sara Sjolander**, and **Judy Reeves**. The fundraiser at EJ's was part of the annual LUEY (Let Us Entertain You) Weekend.

10 **Clay Allen** (l-r) and **Rashad Burgess** from Atlanta and **Tonya Parker** from Dallas joined **Alex Martinez** of Human Rights Campaign Houston, and **W. Jeffrey Campbell** of Fresh Start Church and St. Hope Foundation for the Feb. 4 Learning, Loving and Living Well seminar at Sunnyside Multi-Service Center hosted by Abbott Laboratories, Fresh Start, HRC Houston, Lambda Legal, and St. Hope Foundation.



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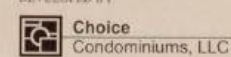
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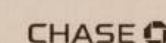
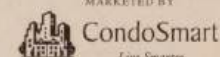
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All information is believed to be accurate but is not warranted.





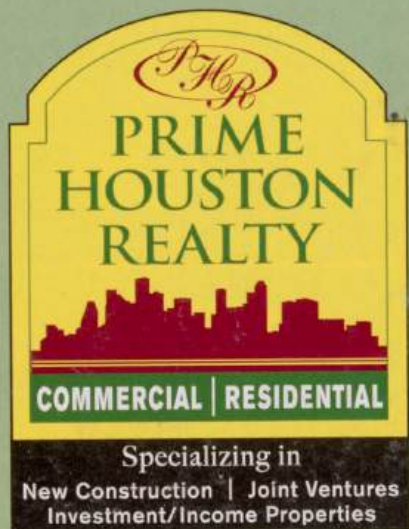
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